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1914

1370 BROADWAY,

Cor. 37th Street,
NEW YORK

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-- THE HIGH COST OF LOVING --

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A Farce in Three Acts

By

FRANK MANDEL

(Founded on the German) ✓

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-:- CAST: -:-

LUDWIG KLINKE, a mustard merchant.

EMMA, his wife.

CORA, their daughter.

EDWARD HAUSER, Emma's brother. Brewer of Hauser-Bean beer.

ROSE, his daughter. Cousin of Cora's.

ALBERT BEAN, Emma's brother-in-law.

LAWRENCE TUCKER, a lawyer.

ANTHONY TIEDEMEYER.

GODFREY BURNHAM, of St. Paul.

MATHILDA, his wife.

NOEL BURNHAM, their son.

LENA, maid at Klinkes'.

SCENE: All three acts take place in the home of Klinke.

SCENE:

A parlor in the home of Ludwig Klinka, Milwaukee, Wis.

Door Right. Near Center large Folding Screen to hallway backing. To Left of door C., a door leading to a closet. Door Left leading to library. Right Wall a door leading to a porch and then out into side yard. Room furnished, as would become a well-to-do merchant. But furniture and draperies in poor taste and a jar of colors, such as might be selected by a German woman with more money than taste.

TIME:

About four in the afternoon.

At rise empty stage.

GORA:

(Picks in from door R. cautiously, runs to C. and calls)
Lena!

LENA:

(Entering C.)
Well, Miss Gora!

GORA:

Where's Mamma?

LENA:

Out in the kitchen, burning the pin feathers off a chicken.
Shall I call her?

GORA:

No, never mind, Lena.

(As soon as LENA exits, GORA runs to telephone)
Hello! I want 1328 Blue. -- Yes -- yes, Lawrence Tucker. Care Klinka. Lawrence. Thank you!.....What? But I can't over the phone.....No, no. You think so because yesterday you were so fresh.....What? Yes...I'm very angry with you...Yes...I won't have anything more to do with you. Heh?

(She listens, and a smile gradually overspreads her face)
Oh, Lawrence....Lemkin -- dear heart. At twelve o'clock today?
At three o'clock? Yes....Behind the band stand in the park.
No - I won't - no, First you must promise to behave! What?
You can't? You ought to be ashamed of yourself! But I can't
talk to you any longer -- mother will be here any

(GORA turns and sees EMMA, who enters C., of the cue: "band
stand". EMMA remains up stage, listens with growing excitement)

EMMA:

Gora! Who are you talking to, Gora?

GORA:

Er - er - cousin.....Cousin Rosie.

EMMA:

Why did you tell her she ought to be ashamed of herself?

GORA:

Well, er -- er -- she wanted me to steal out, and take a
private lesson in Turkey Trotting.

(Takes up the 'phone)

That's all right, Rosie. I can't talk to you any longer now.....
you understand, don 't you Rosie?

EMMA:

(Suspiciously)

So sweet? It 's kinder funny -- it 's kinder funny.....

GORA:

(Injured innocence)

Oh, mamma -- mamma, you think your little baby would fib to.....

(LENA enters C.)

LENA:

Miss Rosie is calling.

(EMMA gives one snap, then snatches phone out of Gora's hand)

(LENA exits C. as ROSIE enters, and listens surprised)

EMMA:

(In phone)

Yes.....yes, I'm here still! What? At three o'clock in the park -- oh, behind the band stand!

(Gives Cora an angry look)

I'll be there! What? A kiss?

(In her own voice)

How dare you, sir! My husband will.....

(Hangs up)

Scandal! -- Scandal! Should come to me -- President of the Mothers' Purity League.

CORA:

Mamma!

EMMA:

Who is this scallawag?

CORA:

(Angrily)

He isn't a scallawag -- it's Lawrence Tucker.

EMMA:

That fellow! A good-for-nothing, a lawyer and a loafer!

(Imitating Cora's voice)

She wouldn't dance the Turkey Trot -- no she wouldn't dance the Turkey.....Rama, what do you think by a girl what tells her Mamma Fibs?

ROSE:

(Giving Cora a friendly nod)

Oh Cora, how could you!

EMMA:

Got to get this broken chair fixed!

(She angrily shoves it over to extreme L.)

Papa'll hear of this -- that's all! Papa'll hear of this!

(EMMA exits L. ROSE laughs)

CORA:

Don't laugh like a silly. It's all your fault.

ROSE:

My fault ?

CORA:

Why in the world did you drop in, - just as I told Mother I was telephoning you ?

(Sitting, disconsolately on settee)

Oh, Rosie, it's horrid - awful! Mamma won't wake up and realize that I'm full of red blood -- that I'm eighteen and ALIVE. She'd like to wrap me up in euther balls and stow me away in a closet.

ROSE:

It's all that old Purity League. She's dragged Papa in -- and Uncle Ben is secretary. They're sticking their noses into everyone's business. The whole town is scared. And of course at home -- they must set an example.

(Pointing to phone)

Cora, who is he?

CORA:

(Complete change - in a voice of rapture. Drying her tears)

He's a lawyer -- a voice as deep as the Atlantic - six foot, dresses like Broadway, eyes that shine like auto lamps.

(Starting toward door G.)

It's so romantic. I sneek behind the band stand, close my eyes, stretch out my arms, creep on, calling: "Laurie, dear Laurie."

(EDWARD HAUSER enters G. and almost runs into Cora's open arms)
Oh, it 's you, Uncle Edward!

EDWARD:

Yes, child.....but I don't remember anyone ever called me "Laurie" before.

CORA:

Uncle, that was just.....

EDWARD:

Who is this Mister Laurie?

ROSE:

Papa, she means "Old Lawrence".

EDWARD:

Who ?

ROSE:

Our old coachman, you know Popple.

(Running her hands through his side whiskers)
 Eh, Popple!

EDWARD:

Rose, whenever you "Popple" me, I know you're telling a fib.
 Cora, your mother'd better.....

(Enter EMMA L.)

Ah! Sister.

EMMA:

Oh, Edward! You come in the nick of time!

(To Cora)

Go to your room at once.

(CORA and ROSE slip out R.)

EDWARD:

What does Cora mean, calling me "Laurie, dear Laurie!"?
 would you please inform me, if you know who this Lawrence is?

EMMA:

Yes, he's.....Sh!

(She goes to door R. - suddenly opens it and finds the two
 girls with their ears to the door)

Cora, up in your room!

(Slams door)

Oh, Edward. Edward! What are our young girls coming to these
 days? I - president of the Mothers' Purity League - my
 daughter, behind my back has been meeting some scoundrel -
 Lawrence Tucker.

EDWARD:

What! That fellow has the audacity to.....

EMMA:

Meet Cora behind the band stand.....Yes.

EDWARD:

Nothing surprises me! A year ago when he ran for City
 Magistrate, the League took him up - investigated him. I read
 over the report.

EMMA:

Well?

EDWARD:

Three times I read it over.

EMMA:

(HorriFied)

Is it as shameful as all that?

EDWARD:

If I remember right, our brother-in-law Albert was chairman of the committee. He's a wonderful investigator. Besides eyes he has a nose -- honestly, -- five miles off he can smell scandal.

(Enter ALBERT DEAN C., a small, shrivelled man of about fifty)

ALBERT:

Emma -- Hello Edward.

EMMA:

Albert.

ALBERT:

Awfully glad to see you. Now we'll have it out. He is...you.....
He's the father of triplets.

EDWARD:

Didn't I tell you so?

ALBERT:

I suspected at once from the likeness. The man has been married four years and has seven children.

EMMA:

What -- Lawrence Tucker ?

ALBERT:

God forbid! The beer wagon driver -- Jenkins.

EDWARD:

Ah, that 's another matter for the moment .

ALBERT:

You were talking about Lawrence Tucker.

(Looks in his pocket)

Wait a moment.

(Takes out a little book)

One moment.

(Looks through book)

P - Q - R - S - T --- T -- T -- Tucker . Here we are. In 1903 an affair with a waitress.

(EDWARD nudges EMMA - EMMA's eyes wide open)

In 1904 love affair with the daughter of his landlady.

(EDWARD looks over Albert's shoulder - EMMA catches his eye)

1905 - same with the daughter of another landlady.

(EDWARD mumbles: "My God!" EMMA drops in a chair like a shock)

1906 - the same with the landlady herself.

(EDWARD flops in a chair. EMMA mumbling)

1907 to 1909 - seen travelling with a milliner.

(EDWARD's and EMMA's eyes meet)

1910 - January an affair with a dancer. The July following with a music hall singer. In October with a trapeze artist -- in 1911... he rested -- 1912 nothing remarkable. In 1913 -- ah, here it is -- is seen openly with the daughter of a good family and nests her behind the band stand.

EMMA:

(Shocked. Rising)

We know that already .

ALBERT:

You know it? Who?

EMMA:

My Cora.

ALBERT:

Impossible! What does Klinka say?

EMMA:

My husband? That piece of wood! His head is filled with mustards.

(ALL laugh)

I have to take care of the whole family. Do everything. Well, I've succeeded. We'll have no more trouble with Cora.

EDWARD:

Emma?

EMMA:

Last summer in Hackin Springs I met Mrs. Godfrey Burnham - a lovely woman! Educated, you can't imagine all she knows about cooking -- accomplished, that woman understands three kinds of embroidery and five different hem-stitches -- and a brain, I never saw no one what could remember so much gossip -- a talker, if I give you my word there wasn't room on the porch when she started to talk scandal.

ALBERT:

Not the Burnhams from St. Paul?

EMMA:

The same. My luck -- she has a son, Noel. He was born on Christmas day, so they called him Noel. For anything that's alive that boy's got no interest. But Latin, Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian -- he knows more about dead things than an undertaker.

ALBERT:

And Cora loves him?

EMMA:

She hasn't seen him. I saw him - that's plenty!! We two mothers got along fine. I gave her my recipe for noodles - and she showed me how to make apple dumplings without wasting even the peelings.

EDWARD:

But he's not in St. Paul?

EMMA:

Leave it to me to fix it nice. Noel comes here to be at the university. So I told him means he should room and board with us. If he carries my Cora I charge him no rent -- if he don't carry her, costs him forty dollars a month. So I can't lose either way.

(ALL laugh)

(LUDWIG EYLNKE enters Night First. He is about fifty years old, a good natured, easy going German, tall, thin. Carries a letter in his hand)

KLINKE:

(Joining the laughter)

You reformers -- I didn't know there was a laugh left in your bones.

EDWARD:

Good day, Ludwig.

ALBERT:

My dear brother-in-law!

KLINKE:

You here too? All three reformers!

(They walk away with an angry, "Huh.")

Say, have a cigar and cheer up.

EMMA:

He! That fellow. My own husband -- he don't care for the city -- for morals -- he eats, drinks, and sleeps with mustard.

KLINKE:

Sweetheart -- not mustard

(Aside)

ice.

EMMA:

You! The biggest enemy the League has got.

KLINKE:

(Frightened at his wife, but anxious to have it out)

Well, why put on your glasses and go back ten, twenty, dirty years in a man's life?

(Pointing to Albert)

Ain't every cow been a calf.....

(Taking his wife's hand)

Every old hen was once a brailer -- and it's natural, every hen was once a boy.

EMMA:

Ludwig!

KLINKE:

I mean er --

EMMA:

Ludwig!!

KLINKE:

(Making snail's eyes)

Er -- er -- well -- er -- me . Emma darling, so -- but what I
 say is -- when you want to investigate so fearful -- investigate
 your own selves; go digging in your own graveyards.

EDWARD:

Ludwig, that's the first article in our constitution. We
 investigate every one - except our own members.

KLINKE:

What's that? What's that??

ALBERT:

A certificate of membership is a moral guarantee. We never
 investigate our brothers.

KLINKE:

(Clearing his throat)

Huh? Huh? What costs it -- such a life membership?

EMMA:

(Filled with hope)

Five hundred dollars. Ludwig?

KLINKE:

Sweetheart - for your sake.

(Walking across- greatly relieved)

Does feel a whole lot better to be a member.

EMMA:

(Kissing him)

Such a good fellow -- and when you came in you looked worried --
 bad humor.

KLINKE:

Bad humor!

(Shows her a paper)

Another decision in the Arbuckle case. It's been two years now since that suit over five hundred tons of mustard.

ALBERT:

What's the matter?

KLINKE:

Arbuckle said it was not strong enough. My mustard not strong enough! He's got another lawyer. Such a fresh fellow - a young shrimp.

ALBERT:

You're a rotten bad business man.

KLINKE:

Me -- I know more in my little finger.....

ALBERT:

What you don't know about business. People take advantage of you.

KLINKE:

And you? I show you some day. I show you! A rotten business man!

EMMA:

Now brother-in-law - don't quarrel. Can't you compromise, Klinke?

KLINKE:

I've tried. This morning I telephoned to the "shrimp". I said, "Men alive, be sensible! By the time the case is over, the mustard will be worthless - all dried up." And you know what he told me, - "You can make insect powder out of it."

EMMA:

My dear Ludwig, can you spare me a moment?

(Sarcastically)

For a matter that does does not concern mustard?

KLINKE:

Now Emma, Emma!

EMMA:

Oera! Behind our backs she's started flirting with a gentleman -- what d'you say to that?

KLINKE:

(Proudly)

Uma! That baby always did take after her papa.

EMMA:

Ludwig!

KLINKE:

(Again humbly)

Well now, Emma, she's eighteen. Can't keep her always in cold storage - got to marry some day.

EMMA:

So? Girls are like eggs -- when you don't keep 'em in cold storage, go rotten.

KLINKE:

That's one side of the question. But Emma, it's the same with girls as it is with mustard. When they're dried up, nobody wants them any more.

(Taking her hand)

You know, Emma, when you're going to live a life with somebody, it's - it's kinder nice to love 'em a little.

EMMA:

Love? Didn't your mother tell YOU to marry ME? Didn't you go and obey your mother?

KLINKE:

Well, I was such a damn obedient son .

EMMA:

Ludwig! Didn't you marry, after knowing me only two days?

KLINKE:

Emma, before I married, I didn't know you at all.

(Pause)

It was all right in the old country....but an American girl.....

EMMA:

You mean to say if you were to marry again, you wouldn't pick me ?

KLINKE:

Well - well - well, what's the use, - all this arguing? Chances a fellow never gets!

(Soothingly)

If our little baby loves him? Who is it?

EMMA:

Lawrence Tucker.

KLINKE:

What? Me?

ALBERT:

You know him?

KLINKE:

That fellow! That's the lawyer shrimp!!

EMMA:

Didn't I tell you so?

KLINKE:

Half the trouble in my life that fellow has brought me . When my stove burned he was the lawyer for the insurance company. Last year, the Democrats wanted me to run for alderman, - the honor of my life, and such an advertisement for my mustard - that fellow's vote knocked me out .

EMMA:

Didn't I tell you so?

KLINKE:

He was the devil, what got the Pure Food people after me - so I can't put no more flour in my mustard.

EMMA:

Didn't I tell you so?

KLINKE:

Don 't always say that to me!! That fellow - he should only dare to ----

(GORA has entered, followed by ROSE, on the cue: "That fellow".
She rushes to her father and puts her arms around him)

GORA:

Papa! Oh, Papa!

KLINKE:

I've a man what took the profit out of mustard? I've a man what would take the shirt off of papa's back?

GORA:

It 's only that mamma

KLINKE:

Leave me alone! For the first time in her life, your mamma is right.

LENA:

(Entering R. and announcing)
 Mr. Tiedemeyer .

GORA:

But papa, - only listen

KLINKE:

Now don 't argue. Don't argue. Just like your mamma, always wants the last word. You tell that shrimp, if I ain 't good enough to be one of the city fathers, then I ain 't good enough to be his father.

(KLINKE follows EMMA off -- she goes C. -
KLINKE L.)

EMMA:

You heard that? The matter is settled once, good and for all.

CORA:

And I was so happy.

EDWARD:

(Picking up his hat)

Rosie, - don't get any foolish notions from that girl.

(Crossing to the cigar box)

These cigars, I wonder if they're made in clean, sanitary factories. I'll take a few along and investigate.

ALBERT:

Goodbye, sister.

(Also going to cigar box)

I don't always take his judgment. I'll investigate a few myself.

(Both exit C.)

EMMA:

(To Cora)

Now I want a few words with you.

ROSE:

Am I in the way?

EMMA:

No, dear Rosie, stay here and learn a little sense.

(To Cora)

What happened today has made me and me feel that Cora, you're better off married. Now there's a young man from St. Paul - Noel Burnham - he's such a nice, good, sweet boy.

CORA:

Yes, I've met that kind.

EMMA:

His mother would like to see him married. So, dearie, always looking out for your good, I told Noel he could stop with us.

CORA:

(Against)

Mamma!

EMMA:

I think he's coming today. Now, not another word! If you're so crazy to fall in love -- there's a man I allow you to fall in love with.

(Exit R.)

Now, not another word.

CORA:

(Who has fought back her tears)

Rome! Rome, they're going to stuff me down some man's throat.

ROSE:

Well, now wait. Have a look first. He may be better than he sounds.

CORA:

A man who'd let his mother dictate whom he should marry.

ROSE:

But your mother may him.

CORA:

Mamma's choice -- mamma's taste! Look at that green dress with yellow ribbons. That's mother's taste! Yellow and green.

ROSE:

But she said he's a nice, good, sweet boy.

CORA:

Instead of blood, he'll have Mellin's food in his veins. I'd rather marry a husband who'd beat me on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, if he could really love me on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

ROSE:

You ought to go like I did to a fortune teller. Madame Cheiros says I'll be very happy if I marry a blond man. And Cora, I love blonds. And she said he's going to be a deep student, a great scholar.

CORA:

Oh brainy men - they're such a nuisance!

ROSE:

And I -- I love a man with glasses and a high forehead and.....

(Suddenly stops short - gasps)

Cora - Cora! Oh, Cora!

CORA:

What is it?

ROSE:

I asked Madame Cheiros his name. She said the first letter was N, the second O ----

CORA:

Yes?

ROSE:

Then she stopped -- came out of her trances. Well? Well?
Don't you see?

CORA:

N - O. N-O - Norman?

ROSE:

It could be Noel.

(ANTHONY TIEDEMEYER, a good natured old gentleman, of about sixty
who looks like Santa Claus, enters left with ELISE)

TIEDEMEYER:

Why Rose, what's the excitement?

ROSE:

I want to look in the dictionary and see how many names begin with N - O ----

(Starts to exit with GORA, Right 1st)

KLINKE:

(Who has gotten his long pipe)

All right, Gora - Gora, run along and leave me alone with your uncle.

(KLINKE watches them off and closes the door)

TIEDEMEYER:

What's the matter, Ludwig? So mysterious?

KLINKE:

Sushi! A secret. Sit down. Have a cigar. Tiedemeyer, this is Masonic.

(They sit)

TIEDEMEYER:

You got me curious.

KLINKE:

(Rings)

See if anyone is in the next room?

TIEDEMEYER:

(Opens door L., looks out)

No, nobody there.

KLINKE:

(Looking out door R.)

Not here. You know William Keen, the attorney that had in his hands, all my business, is dead.

TIEDEMEYER:

Yes. They say young Keppel has taken over his practice.

KLINKE:

And you see Keppel and my wife are distantly related -- a second cousin or a step uncle by marriage. My wife, that's all she got - nothing but poor relations.

TIEDEMEYER:

Well then, you can safely hand over all the papers to Kappel - as long as he's in the family.

KLINKE:

Yes, I have given him my papers....all.....

(Takes a thick packet from his vest pocket)
except one.

TIEDEMEYER:

Ludwig??

KLINKE:

Tiedemeyer, it's an awful confidence. Twenty-five years ago - maybe you remember - they played "Pink Dominoes" here?

TIEDEMEYER:

(With a broad smile)

Do I remember? Forty girls in the chorus. The first time I ever saw a woman's figure outside of a picture gallery. Tight - and such figures!

KLINKE:

Tiedemeyer - you? The marble pillar of the League?

TIEDEMEYER:

Ludwig, twenty-five years ago there were a few cracks in the pillar. My morals only started to turn so good, when my hair began to turn so white. There was a girl, leader of the ballet -- er -- er -- wait a minute, I'll think of her name -- er -- er --

KLINKE:

The one called the Lightning Bug??

TIEDEMEYER:

Now you struck it! The Lightning Bug! All during the week I tried to invite her to supper. But, every night, so funny, that girl had an appointment with some fool fellow.



KLINKE:

Tiedemeyer - I was the fellow .

TIEDEMEYER:

You? Ludwig, I thought your whole life was wrapped up in mustard.

KLINKE:

But twenty-five years ago, I had a wide line - side. Oh, we flew around together- I and the Lightning Bug. Then I forgot all about her . She promised to send me for Christmas a present.

TIEDEMEYER:

Well?

KLINKE:

Oh, I had an awful surprise - on Christmas day.

TIEDEMEYER:

Christmas - a present?

KLINKE:

Such a present! I got a telegram, congratulating me - I was a father.

TIEDEMEYER:

What?

KLINKE:

And later this picture, -decorated with holly berries.

(Takes a photograph from the packet and shows it to him)

TIEDEMEYER:

A girl?

KLINKE:

No, a boy.

TIEDEMEYER:

Gee-Rootsalem! What's on the back of it?

KLINKE:

(Reading the reverse side of the picture)

"Hello, Popsie, how'd you do,
Here's a little Christmas gift for you."

TIEDEMEYER:

(Gitting)

Whew! I'm mighty glad she couldn't accept MY invitation.

KLINKE:

I went to my lawyer. I was engaged at the time. I told him I didn't want to be mixed up in any scandal. So for the last twenty-four years he sent forty dollars a month --

TIEDEMEYER:

The profit on ten barrels of mustard.

KLINKE:

Now that my lawyer's dead - and Keppel is my wife's relation - I'm dying to know where to keep these darn receipts. So, Tiedemeyer, - my old friend Tiedemeyer, I wondered if you.....

TIEDEMEYER:

(As if they were poison)

I wouldn't soil my fingers with 'em!! I, the second vice president of the League! Put them in your safe deposit box.

KLINKE:

My wife keeps the key for it.

(Looking at the paper)

She should see these -- the president of the League.

TIEDEMEYER:

Well, man alive, haven't you got some place.....

KLINKE:

Ain't I telling you, I haven't a thing in the world my wife don't stick her nose in! Tiedemeyer, haven't you a lawyer

TIEDEMEYER:

Yes, I got.....

KLINKE:

Well, tell your lawyer to keep them in his safe.

(EMMA heard off calling "Ludwig!")

Sssh!

EMMA:

(Enters E.)

My dear Ludwig.....

TIEDEMAYER:

(Keeps his hands behind his back, confused, holding papers)
Good day, - Emma.

EMMA:

Ain 't you going to give me your hand ?

TIEDEMAYER:

Of course.

(Looks at Klinke in despair)

(KLINKE takes the papers and holds them behind his back)

I'll give you both hands.

(Holds out his hands to Emma)

EMMA:

Ludwig -- quick -- give me two and a half. I want to pay the butcher.

KLINKE:

I can't now.

EMMA:

Why not?

KLINKE:

My hands are full.

EMMA:

Of what?

KLINKE:

I....I've got such a lot to do. What do you want money for again so soon? So extravagant.

(To Thiedemeyer)

Take this thing.

TI EDEMAYER:

(Frightened)

What?....I.....Oh.....

EMMA:

(To Klinko)

What's the matter with you? Why do you keep your hands behind your back?

KLINKE:

(Giving TI EDEMAYER the papers, gesticulates absent-mindedly with his hands)

What did you say? What's your back for, but to put your hands behind it.

(To Emma)

I can do what I like with my own hands .

(Takes out pocket-book)

Here 's the money. Emma darling, the most saving little wife in the world.

(Looks in purse)

I haven't got that much. Here - I got money upstairs in my trousers' pocket.

EMMA:

Oh, no, you haven 't. I've been through them.

KLINKE:

What?

(Laughing)

Emma, I hid it in the back pocket.

(Starts to exit R.)

EMMA:

Ludwig!

(Crosses to Tiedemeyer)

Goodbye.

TI EDEMAYER:

(Keeping his hands behind his back, confused)

Goodbye- goodbye.

EMMA:

What's the matter with him?

(Exit EMMA and KLINKE R.)

TIEDEMEYER:

(Goes to door Right First, calls)

goodbye, Cora.

CORR:

(Entering with ROSE - they have been picking flowers)

Goodbye.

ROSE:

What have you got in that package ?

TIEDEMEYER:

I.....I --

(Lets the picture slip out of the package)

ROSE:

Who's picture is that?

(Picks it up)

CORR:

A baby. Isn't he cute?

TIEDEMEYER:

Give me that picture right away.

(Sticking it in his vest pocket)

I must give these papers to my lawyer or I can't have a quiet minute.

(Exit G.)

Goodbye, children.

ROSE:

I must go also.

(Waits till TIEDEMEYER has exited, then whispers to Cora)

I'll run down to the corner drug store and 'phone Laurie for you. Explain to him exactly how matters stand.

(Enter LENA C.)

LENA:

Miss Cora, a young man has called. He is asking for your mother.

CORA:

Oh, heavens! Did you hear that, Rosie?

ROSE:

What sort of a man?

LENA:

The sort that stumbles over the umbrella stand.

(Hands CORA a card)

CORA:

Noel Burnham.

ROSE:

The nice, good sweet boy.

LENA:

Shall I show him in?

ROSE:

Yes. Tell him the young lady will see him.

(LENA exits C.)

CORA:

What are you talking about? I won't see him.

ROSE:

Then I will.

CORA:

You!!

ROSE:

I'll look him over and report to you.

LENA:

(At door)

The young lady says

(CORA exits R. hastily)

(NOEL enters C. A timid, blond young man of twenty-four, wearing large, dark blue eyeglasses, smooth hair, carries an umbrella. Is very bashful and has a habit of hesitating in speaking - straining for a word)

NOEL:

Excuse me, Miss . Do I disturb you? I'm Noel Burnham.

ROSE:

(stiffly)

Sit down, please.

(He lays his hat on chair C.)

NOEL:

If I may make so bold.

(Takes off his blue glasses)

I strained them reading.

(Smiles at her, crosses timidly to sit in a chair furthest off, extreme L.)

ROSE:

Oh, look out - that's the broken chair .

NOEL:

Oh, excuse me - I - er -- I always manage to pick out the wrong thing.

ROSE:

Won't you sit here ?

NOEL:

Oh, if I may be permitted. Thank you.

ROSE:

Careful. You 're going to sit on your hat .

NOEL:

Oh, -er -- excuse me -- er -- er -- a thousand pardons.

(He Xes and sits on settee -- a long pause)

Is your mother at home?

ROSE:

(Stiffly)

No.

NOEL:

What a pity.

ROSE:

(Same play)

Yes, a great pity.

(Xes and sits beside him on settee)

NOEL:

Terrible pity!

(A pause)

My mother asked me to give your mother her love.

ROSE:

(Same play)

My mother will be very much pleased.

(A pause)

Noel, - not a very usual name. Do you spell it N-o--?

NOEL:

Yes, N-o-o-l -- Noel. Nice Natiles - born on Thwistres -- don't you understand Latin?

ROSE:

No.

NOEL:

Fancy that. It's easier than English. Greek, Babylonian, Hebrew, Egyptian, Assyrian -- they're all so easy. I'm coming here to the university as professor of ancient languages.

ROSE:

What - a regular college professor?

NOEL:

Why -- er -- er -- quite regular -- yes. In fact I've labored so long among dead people, that I'm not quite er -- er -- at ease when I'm with a er - er -- now what's the word??

ROSE:

A live one?

NOEL:

Exactly!

ROSE:

And you think I'm.....

NOEL:

Oh, but I do feel at home with you. Er -- er -- really I, er -- I feel er -- er -- now how shall I say it.....?

ROSE:

Complacently comfortable??

NOEL:

That's the idea. Only I'm afraid I'll bore you. Now, if you were an ancient -- for instance the Queen of Assyria --

ROSE:

(Laughing)

Well, I'm sorry I'm not an old mummy.

NOEL:

Oh, don't misunderstand -- I'm not. I - er - well to confide in you - up to a month ago all my women acquaintances had been dead a few thousand years. But some friends urged me to go to a college dance. And a very pretty girl -- oh very pretty -- made me dance - it 's called.....

(Gets up to illustrate)

You put your foot like that -- then you take back your foot and put it some place else -- mind you all the time wiggling your body -- it's called -- er -- er --- now what's the name?

ROSE:

The Tango?

NOEL:

Precisely! And I made a very interesting discovery -- oh very interesting.

ROSE:

A discovery?

NOEL:

I found that a lovely girl -- just putting your arm around her -- seems to give a man a most peculiar or -- or -- or -----

ROSE:

Electrical stimulus?

NOEL:

Exactly! -- an electrical stimulus. A stimulus that one never obtains in the most intimate contact with mummies.

ROSE:

And you discovered that all by yourself?

NOEL:

Oh, quite by myself. Really, it came like a flash. So when my mother suggested marriage --

ROSE:

I see you're a very obedient son.

NOEL:

Well, I said to my mother:- "I'll take a look at herBut if I don't like her, I'll come straight home".

(Picking up his hat)

So now goodbye.

ROSE:

Such impertinence! Well, a very pleasant journey home.

NOEL:

Oh er - er - excuse me -- Always my words and my thoughts seem to tangle. I was merely going to order the express man to deliver my trunk, so that I could stay.

ROSE:

(Laughing)

Oh, I thought you were going home!

NOEL:

Oh no - most emphatically no! Please remember me to your mother -- and as for you.....

ROSE:

Er -- er -- isn't that my umbrella you've taken?

NOEL:

Oh, I beg a thousand pardons. Fancy taking your umbrella?

(Takes his own and puts on his dark blue glasses)

And as for you, Miss Winkle, you needn't be jealous of all those dead Babylonian queens -- for there's something about the warmth of your hand that gives a peculiar er - er -- now what shall I say?

ROSE:

Thrill?

NOEL:

That's the word. A thrill that goes right up my spine.

ROSE:

(Again offering her hand)

Goodbye again.

NOEL:

And if you'll tell your mother that her daughter stirs in me, the er -- er - er -- now, what 's the word?

ROSE:

Spark of life??

MOEL:

Exactly!

(Starts to exit and opens the wrong door, it 's the closet)

Oh, I beg a thousand pardons!

(Wheels around and exits C.)

(As the same moment CORA enters R.)

CORA:

Well, is he so awful?

ROSE:

(Put out)

I like that! And you needn't worry for e knows nothing about you.

CORA:

Thank goodness! What does he look like?

ROSE:

(Leading her to window)

Beautiful blond hair. A professor. Look for yourself.

(The bell rings, and LENA enters C.)

LENA:

Mr. Tucker.

(LAURENCE follows her up without waiting to be announced)

TUCKER:

Ah!

(Taking both of Cora's hands)

My dear little Cora!

CORA:

Lambkin!

TUCKER:

Excuse me.

(To Rose)

Don 't you think you'd better tell Cora 's folks I'm here?

(CORA makes a face)

Mr.

ROSE:

It's better, Cora, than to have them catch you. I'll call them.
(ROSE exits R.)

TUCKER:

Well, am I going to get that kiss?

CORA:

No, no. -- if mamma and papa saw you?

TUCKER:

Well, don't they kiss?

CORA:

But they're married.

TUCKER:

Well, I'm willing to be.

(LENA enters C.)

Oh, I wonder if Lena could take a message for me to the Telegraph office. So anxious to see you I forgot to send it.

CORA:

Certainly.

(LENA nods - CORA looks over his shoulder to read it)

"Miss Clarabel Venner,
431 West 45th Street,
New York.

Strike while the iron is hot. If the former Lightning Bug strikes for double her allowance on account of high cost of living, none of the good ladies can risk a refusal. Make same payable to me. Ten per cent commission for information and services.

Lawrence Tucker - Attorney-at-law."

What a funny message!

TUCKER:

It's a case I just got on to. And it's a whole lot funnier than you think!

(LENA takes message and exits C.)

CORA:

Oh, Laurie, they want me to marry somebody else.

TUCKER:

When? What? Who?

CORA:

The young fool of a college professor, called Noel Burnham.

TUCKER:

That blond baby I met on the steps? You say his name is Noel?

CORA:

Yes - he was born on Christmas.

TUCKER:

Splendid! Oh, how I can use him.

(Laughing)

And just let your father begin with me. I never lost a case in my life -- and this case.....

CORA:

But Laurie, they claim your past is so awfully black .

TUCKER:

Gee, Cora, isn't that a lawyer's business -- to prove black is white?

(Throws his arms about her)

Sweetheart!

(At that moment, KLINKE and EMMA enter Right. They stand watching the long, lingering hug. Then KLINKE nudges his wife)

KLINKE:

Emma, you need a little more ice in your refrigerator .

EMMA:

(Angrily)

Sir! What are you doing? My daughter!

TUCKER:

Well, I guess the truth is out. So, dear parents, all we can ask is your blessing.

EMMA:

You must be joking if you think we 're going to give our baby to you.

TUCKER:

Why not? Is there anything against me?

(EMMA laughs. Turning to Klink)

Is there?

(KLINKE laughs)

Your objections seem to be very serious.....perhaps you 'll explain .

EMMA:

We will.

(To Cora)

Leave the room.

CORA:

Oh, Popsie!

KLINKE:

Cora, when your mother says anything, you got to obey -- and I got to obey.

(CORA exits Right)

EMMA:

Now my husband will answer you.....Ludwig!

KLINKE:

(Frightened)

Maybe you better talk to him .

EMMA:

Ludwig, ain 't you a man?

TUCKER:

What's wrong with me anyway?

EMMA:

You ask that, after secret meetings with our daughter... behind our backs?

TUCKER:

(To Klinko)

Well, didn 't you ever have a little private meeting ?

KLINKO:

I refuse to answer such a question.

EMMA:

Think of your past. Six lady loves in eight years.

TUCKER:

That's a mistake.

EMMA:

Oh, indeed.

TUCKER:

Yes. -- it was eight affairs in six years .

KLINKO:

And you expect a man of my character to give our daughter to such a rake?

TUCKER:

Now wait a minute. That all sounds like the Purity Protective League. Rot! If a fellow, head in his rent, treats his landlady's daughter twice in succession to an ice cream soda, you mark down "Affair with a landlady's daughter".

KLINKO:

Don 't insult that League -- you insult me -- its youngest member .

TUCKER:

If a lawyer in trying to collect a bill visits a milliner a couple of times, you mark down "scandal with a milliner".

KLINKE:

(Pacing the floor)

You ought to be ashamed of yourself -- young man.

TUCKER:

(Laughing)

Now, good friends, don't be too severe. After all such things often occur -- in the best of regulated families. You across them all the time in my practice. Why, some years ago one of our most worthy citizens had an affair with a dancer.

KLINKE:

What's this? What's this?

TUCKER:

A leader of the ballet -- called the Lightning Bug.

KLINKE:

Yes, I know. Know all about that.

(Quietly)

We don't care anything about this matter.

EMMA:

Why, Ludwig, it's very interesting. As a Member of the League you ought to interest yourself.

KLINKE:

Now, Emma -- Emma, it don't concern us.

TUCKER:

She was a dancer in "Pink Dominoes" -- our worthy citizen used to take her buggy riding.

KLINKE:

Well? That's just a harmless little amusement.

TUCKER:

Quite harmless. In a short time he was a father.

EMMA:

A father? Ludwig, did you hear that?

KLINKE:

Yes, yes, I know it.

(Pretending anger)

I won't have you say such things before my wife!

EMMA:

Ludwig, I wish to know the name of.....

KLINKE:

Now Emma, that's no business of yours.

EMMA:

You said he quickly became a father.

TUCKER:

On Christmas day.....

KLINKE:

(Aside)

That fellow! That devil!

TUCKER:

He got word that a great joy was his, and received a photograph of his child.

(Takes the picture from his pocket)

Here it is.

KLINKE:

(Dazed)

You've got the picture?

TUCKER:

The berries are a little faded.

EMMA:

Let me see it?

KLINKKE:

No, I won 't allow that.

(Struggles with TUCKER)

She's so sympathetic, my wife -- she won 't sleep all night long .

EMMA:

The father of course did not recognize her as his daughter?

KLINKKE:

It was a son.

EMMA:

What did you say?

TUCKER:

It was a son .

EMMA:

What a case for the League -- to discover the father!!

TUCKER:

I cannot give you his name.

KLINKKE:

(Aside)

Not such a bad fellow.

EMMA:

But I insist on knowing.

KLINKKE:

Now Emma, Emma, don't! -- Maybe the young man has given his word of honor. And as a member of the League I won 't allow anyone to be forced to break their word of honor.

TUCKER:

Oh no, I didn't give my word of honor.

KLINKE:

(Crossing)
That devil there!

EMMA:

What a pity! As President of the League, I must interest myself in this matter. Does the child look like his father?

TUCKER:

The likeness is striking....When I looked at this picture it seemed to me I could see the father standing before me.

KLINKE:

(Whiting, and moving off)
That devil there!

EMMA:

Then Ludwig.....

KLINKE:

(Coming to her like a whipped dog)
Ye-e-es darling.

EMMA:

You've just joined the League. As your first task I'll appoint you chairman of the committee -- to track this father down.

KLINKE:

Never, Emma. No! The poor man. After twenty-five years.....

EMMA:

Truth will out -- I don't care for the man.

KLINKE:

Well, I do. It 's different with me.

EMMA:

Then I shall go to Albert -- my brother Albert Neen. -- What he can 't find out ain 't worth knowing .

KLINKE:

(Leaning weakly against table at C.)

Mustard -- mustard -- all day mustard -- and when you come home you're in mustard again.

(Enter TIEDEMEYER Right First)

TIEDEMEYER:

Well, well, folks.

EMMA:

Excuse me, please.

(About to exit)

KLINKE:

Where are you going?

EMMA:

To Albert. I intend to find out who the father of that child is.

(Exits C.)

KLINKE:

Tiedemeyer, you villain, where are my papers?

TIEDEMEYER:

Don't worry. They're in the best of hands.

KLINKE:

Who did you give them to?

TIEDEMEYER:

(Pointing to Tucker)

To my lawyer, Laurie.

KLINKE:

(Sinking into his chair)

Good night!

CURTAIN.

J. E. NASH,



70 BROADWAY,
Cor. 37th Street,
NEW YORK

PS
3525
A522H5
1914

-:- THE HIGH COST OF LOVING -:-

A C T II


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-: THE HIGH COST OF LOVING -:

ACT II

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SCENE: Same as Act I.

DISCOVERED: CORA L. at table, silently weeping. ROSE enters C., with armful of books.

CORA:

Oh, Rose, I'm so glad you've come.

(Arms around her)

Not a word from Laurie, mother and father tell me nothing -- a fearful silence. Oh, what a lot of books you've got.

ROSE:

(Confused)

Er - er - - yes. They're from a circulating library.

CORA:

"Morality among the Babylonians" - "Marriage in Ancient Times" -

"Introduction to the Interpretation of Cuneiform Writing" -

(Gives her a look of inquiry)

ROSE:

Oh, they're fascinating! Jack London or Robert Chambers isn't in it with them.

(LENA enters C. and comes down L. of Cora)

LENA:

(Whispering to Cora)

Miss Cora, the gentleman is here again.

ROSE:

Oh heavens, give me the books!

(Takes them and starts to rush off L.)

CORA:

Which gentleman?

LENA:

You knowthe telegram gentlemen.

ROSE:

(Realizing, shutting door and returning)

Oh, that one!

(TUCKER enters C., and as LENA exits C., throws arms around Cora)

CORA:

Well, at least, Laurie. You risked coming? What's going on?
 Mother wrote invitations half the night for a special meeting.
 The whole League is invited.

TUCKER:

(Laughing)

They're going to hold court!

CORA:

About you?

TUCKER:

No, this time they've another sinner on the griddle .

ROSE:

What's going on ?

TUCKER:

It's not for young girls.

(LENA re-enters, comes down L. of Cora, whispering)

LENA:

Miss Cora - your Uncle Edward is outside .

(Consternation)

(CORA: "What?" TUCKER: "Oh." ROSE: "Papa?")

And he wants to see Mr . Tucker.

CORA:

You? Laurie we're found out.!

TUCKER:

(Going up to C.)

I'm not afraid.

CORA:

Laurie?

(EDWARD HAUSER, enters C., frightfully worried. He crosses to LAURIE, and to the surprise of all, grasps Laurie warmly by the hand.)

EDWARD:

Ah, Mr. Tucker -- Mr. Tucker!

ROSE:

(Surprised)
Papa!

CORA:

You're not angry?

EDWARD:

No. No! But for heaven's sake leave us alone a moment.

CORA:

Don't get Laurie into trouble, uncle. I asked him to come. I begged him. It's all my fault.

EDWARD:

(Worried, and in a fearful hurry)

Yes, yes, yes! He needn't be afraid of me.

(CORA and ROSE exit L.)

(HAUSER crosses to door L. and sees that it is tightly closed - also no one listening behind portieres C.)

Have a chair.

(Sitting - in a humble voice, very nervous)

Now I presume anything I tell you as an attorney will be privileged and sacred. You'll never use it against me?

TUCKER:

Certainly not. Legal ethics. But you look frantic?

EDWARD:

(Rising)

Have you ever sat up all night, writing invitations to your own funeral?

TUCKER:

(Also rising)

I beg your pardon!

EDWARD:

I went to your office. Your boy told me you were here. Not a moment's to be lost. Sit down.

(Both sit - speaks slowly and solemnly)

Listen! Twenty-five years ago "Pink Road nose" -----

TUCKER:

(Rising)

Oh! Oh, I know all about.....

EDWARD:

The lightning bug -- leader of the ballet. Well, sir, we was frightfully busy - rehearsing, and night and day practising new steps. But that lovely lady made an exception in my case.

TUCKER:

Your case? I thought it.....

EDWARD:

What did you think?

TUCKER:

Go on.

EDWARD:

She made an exception. I was the ONLY man she met. For me, she stole a few precious minutes from her work. She saw me Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

TUCKER:

Oh Capital - capital!! And in the evenings?

EDWARD:

Haven't I been telling you? Busy - always practising new steps.

TUCKER:

(Roaring)

Oh, this is too rich!

EDWARD:

Rich?

TUCKER:

You? Corresponding Secretary of the League!!

EDWARD:

But I couldn't have fathered the League, if twenty-five years ago I hadn't learnt that "it pays to be good". On Christmas day I received an awful shock. Look!

TUCKER:

A picture of a baby boy!

(Doubles with laughter)

Where have I seen this before?

EDWARD:

See what's written on the back.

TUCKER:

I'll bet I can guess.

EDWARD:

A hundred dollars that you can't.

TUCKER:

"Hello Popsie, how d'ye do
Here's a little Christmas gift for you."

EDWARD:

(Thunderstruck)

You win!

TUCKER:

You forget I'm her attorney.

EDWARD:

What could I do? I was engaged to marry a rich girl at the time .

TUCKER:

But possibly, you could prove some other.....

EDWARD:

How many times must I repeat that!! I was the only man she met -- all the rest of the time she was rehearsing new steps.

(Proudly)

I was the only man she cared to meet.

TUCKER:

Oh, this is wonderful -- wonderful!

EDWARD:

Since that never-to-be-forgotten Christmas I've been allowing her fifty dollars a month.

TUCKER:

Fifty?

EDWARD:

Could a man send less? And now, after twenty-five years..... I receive this before breakfast..

(Draws out a telegram)

"Double allowance and pay amount to my attorney, Lawrence Tucker, or I shall institute public suit for same. This increase is made necessary -- by the high cost of living. "

TUCKER:

(Laughing)

The high cost of living -- what it doesn't get it used for!!

EDWARD:

Mr. Tucker, I can't raise the money. Every dollar of my income my wife keeps track of. That fifty dollars represented blood money -- old clothes that I secretly sold second-hand -- occasionally pawning a present - cigars that I took to smoke, and kept to sell.

(Throws up his hands - sinks down in despair)

(Suddenly draws out the picture again)

You think the baby resembles me ?

TUCKER:

Not at two months.

EDWARD:

My brother-in-law Albert is tracking down the father.

(Grasping Tucker's hand)

Mr. Tucker, delay that suit two weeks - give me time to think.
You're such a fine young gentleman.

TUCKER:

Yesterday I was the biggest scamp alive.

EDWARD:

Shush. - Who's coming - I can't be seen talking to you.

(CORA and ROSE enter L.)

Oh Cora, - Rosie. Rosie, not a word that your papa's been here.

ROSE:

Papa? So worried. What have you been talking about?

TUCKER:

Politics.

EDWARD:

(Exiting Right 1st)

The country is going to the dogs! We're all being ruined by the high cost of living.

CORA:

He's worse than my papa. Oh, father is raging.

TUCKER:

About me?

COR A:

Yes -- oh at breakfast.....what he called y u, and what he called dear Uncle Tiedemeyer!! And what he said about President Wilson - and the high cost of living??

TUCKER:

When was this?

COBA:

Why this morning when she set the table Lena put a telegram under his grape fruit.

TUCKER:

Ha, ha! Wonderful!

872.

(1934-35-36)

They're all going crazy over politics.

3174:

(Entering C.)

Miss Cure, the little gentleman from St. Paul is here again.

R 111

(Overlaid)

No. 12

272

I haven't seen him and I won 't see him.

(To Laura)

The man named Isaccoo for me . A little rowed off, hammered-down.

ROSE:

That's not true.

LAURET E:

Ans: My deedly deedly. I'd like to have a peek at him -- this Christmas baby.

(~~ENT~~ LENA O.)

CORA:

I won 't see him .
(About to exit R.)

TUCKER:

Then I shall! A general has to know how to learn the strength of his enemy. I'll draw his fire. To stay, Rose.

ROSE:

No, I can't .
(She exits R. with CORA)
(After a moment NOEL enters C., takes off his blue glasses -
sees TUCKER)

NOEL:

Oh, er - excuse me - am I in error again? I thought I was in the right house.

TUCKER:

So you are.

NOEL:

Really? And the young lady?

TUCKER:

(Imitating a girl fixing her hair and buttoning her dress)
 You know.

(Greeting him)

I am - er - Mr . Tucker. Won 't you have a seat ?

NOEL:

If I may.

(Sits on books - then reads titles, surprised)

Oh, I beg a thousand pardons . "The History of Cuneiform Writing". "Morality among the Babylonians". Are you an Egyptologist?

TUCKER:

The young lady is.....since yesterday morning.

NOEL:

(Pleased)

Ah!! And you 're one of the family?

TUCKER:

Well so to speak, yes.

(Deeper voice)

Yes.

(Full voice)

The family owe a lot to me.

NOEL:

(Embarrassed)

Then I suppose you 've heard my reason for being here?

(Smiling timidly)

It 's such a remarkable -- romantic coincidence . Our mothers are
 so congenial. And as for the young lady and I -- it 's a case of -
 er -- er -- er -- now - er - what's the expression?

TUCKER:

Spontaneous combustion?

NOEL:

Precisely.

TUCKER:

You mean the little blonde lady ?

NOEL:

No - er - tall, thin, brunettish.

TUCKER:

(Breathing relief)

Oh!!

(As TUCKER crosses)

No wonder Rodie defended him . My best wishes, young friend. I 'd
 like to help you.

NOEL:

Would you ?

(Timorously following up TUCKER)

To be sure, my dear mother gave me some instructions. She told me how my father blushinglly approached her - twenty-three years ago....but I scarcely believe that's the fashion nowadays.

TUCKER:

Oh, long-drawn courtships went out of date, when the taxis came in. This is the age of speed.

NOEL:

(Shaking his head, sighing)

I've no idea how to win the heart of a young lady. And there's no one you can go to, for good advice.

TUCKER:

Oh, nowadays, a fellow doesn't beat around the bush -- he goes right to the mark. Just watch.

(Crosses to door R.)

Oh, Cora!

(CORA enters R.)

CORA:

What is it?

NOEL:

(Introducing himself)

I'm Professor Noel Burnham.

CORA:

(Surveying him from head to foot)

You look it.

TUCKER:

(To Noel)

See -- the young lady stands here; and here you are. Now you middle up right close

(Does so)

find her hand --

(Does so)

and just squeeze her till she can't breathe.

(Does so)

ORA:

(In friendly laughter)

But Laurie! Stop!

TUCKER:

Now you see that's the way.

(Proudly)

What do you say to that?

NOEL:

(Who has watched dumbfounded)

Splendid! I believe I shall try it .

ORA:

(Takes the last sentence to mean her)

Not on me!

(Rushes out R.)

NOEL:

(Scratching his head and faintly smiling)

The thing seems very simple.

(Shake's Tucker's hand)

A thousand thanks. I've had a college education . I think I ought to be able to do that.

(ROSE enters R. wearing a perfectly innocent expression - as if surprised to see Noel)

ROSE:

Ah, Noel! Gave told me you were here, and that you wanted to show me some thing.

(TUCKER suppresses a smile and starts to rush off.)

You're not running away?

TUCKER:

(Exiting R.)

Why I have the same thing he has, and I was going to show it to Gave.

(Exits R.)

(NOEL fingers the books nervously, approaches ROSE several times and hesitates before speaking)

ROSE:
What's all this myatery?

NOEL:
(With a smile of an embarrassed boy - Referring to Tucker 's exit
A most interesting man -- and oh, so accomodating.

ROSE:
What did he tell you ?

NOEL:
He said....I should.....

ROSE:
What?

NOEL:
(With decision - aside)
I'll risk it.
(Gets very close and gently takes her hand)
Dear Rose.
(He kisses her several times)

ROSE:
But Mr. Burnham! I can't breathe.

NOEL:
(Tremendously satisfied)
Exactly.

ROSE:
But or ----

NOEL:
(Accenting each sentence with asqueeze)
I knew I could do it - I knew I could do it -- I knew I
could do it.....And I can do it again .

ROSE:
Mr. Burnham..... really! How dare you!

NOEL:

(Astounded)
You're angry? And that was my first kiss!

ROSE:

Really?

NOEL:

Honestly .

ROSE:

(Slipping her hand in his - all smiles)
Oh, to be a man's first love! You did wonderfully well .

NOEL:

Since I've met you I've grown five thousand years younger. And you - you 're reading.....

(Points to books)

ROSE:

(Rashfully, pushing them aside)
Oh, Noel! Madame Chevre said it was written in the book of fate .

NOEL:

That kiss! You know I believe I've wanted to kiss before, but I never quite understood where the peculiar feeling came from.

ROSE:

Noel!

(They embrace. Suddenly)
Oh heavens, somebody is coming.
(Exits quickly, L.)

NOEL:

(Throwing kisses after her)
Until I see you again.
(TUCKER enters R.)

TUCKER:

Well, my friend, did it work?

NOEL:

So easily that I'm almost afraid she kinder er - er - er -----

TUCKER:

Anticipated?

NOEL:

Exactly. I'm going to Mr. Klinke today and ask for his consent .

TUCKER:

Mr. Klinke?

NOEL:

Her father.

TUCKER:

(With a wicked smile)

Ah, yes!! Yes. Cat-fussies, but you're courageous!

NOEL:

Do you know Mr . Klinke well? I'm so afraid to meet him .

TUCKER:

Oh, just you go toward him, open your arms.....

NOEL:

(Throwing his arms about Tucker)

Yes, I know -- until he can't breathe .

TUCKER:

No. You open your arms and merely say, "Rejoice father, now I am here".

NOEL:

(After a pause)

Father....? Why, father?

TUCKER:

Tell if you expect to be his son-in-law.....

NOEL:

Ah -- yes . Father? Call him father, right off?

TUCKER:

This is the age of speed.

NOEL:

Rejoice father now I am here.

TUCKER:

Oh, you can 't imagine what an impression you 'll create with just those few words.

NOEL:

(With a broad, bland smile)

Ah, yes -- I think he will like that.

TUCKER:

You follow me - and you'll surely make an impression. Come out and have a drink, just to put a little fire in your soul.

NOEL:

(With determination)

By George, I will -- if you make it a chocolate and malted milk.

CORA:

(Who has entered R. on the over "have a drink ")

(Surprised)

A drink! You two friends?

TUCKER:

(Swinging his arm in Noel's and exiting with him)

Friends? Why Mr. Burnham's a great man . He 's the man this whole town is looking for .

(CORA stands dumbfounded.)

(NITCHE enters L., the picture of hopeless despair)

KLINKE:

Cora! Cora! - who you looking at -- somebody go out ?

CORA:

Why no - no.

(Just then the outer door slams)

KLINKE:

Well what they doing - slamming the door, to see if the hinges work?

(Sits, rubbing his forehead)

CORA:

Papa, you sick -- what is it?

KLINKE:

Oh, I got something that I don't agree with me this morning, in my grape fruit?

CORA:

Oh, poor papa! And look, I brought you a little present.

(Draws out a gypsy charm)

A luck piece - a charm that never fails - "Lucky you 'll be, for luck follows me ". It 's wonderful .

KLINKE:

Well, if anything can give your poor papa luck, it's surely wonderful .

(about to hand it back)

CORA:

Aren 't you going to keep it?

KLINKE:

All right - I - er - all right baby. But sweetie, my lucky days are over . The high cost of living!!

(Arm around her whispering)

Cora - that young fellow, that lawyer....where is he?

GORA:

Mr. Tucker? Papa, didn't you tell me I should never, never see him again?

KLINKE:

A fine young scamp. Never in his office - not five minutes!!

GORA:

(Angrily)

How do you know? How can you say that?

KLINKE:

Ain 't I been there a dozen times?

GORA:

You? His office? Papa!

KLINKE:

Well er - er - I mean - er - er -- he 's a lawyer . I got business. Oh, don 't bother your papa - he's a sick man!

(Sinking into a chair)

(EMMA enters C. on cue: "sick man" - excitedly)

EMMA:

Ludwig, what 's the matter with you? All you men sick? I just came from Hausers' - Edward is sick too -- a regular epidemic.

KLINKE:

He? Sick? He should only get what I got. He don 't know how lucky he is.

GORA:

(Starting to exit L.)

Papa, maybe it 's a little gripe coming. Shall I go upstairs and fix you a hot bath?

KLINKE:

(Calling after her)

Hot water! Hot water! I been in enough hot water.

(EMMA waits till GORA has exited, then rushes to her husband)

EMMA:

Ludwig - today I'll find out.

KLINKE:

(Angrily)

Find out what?

EMMA:

Who the father is.

KLINKE:

Come darling -- sweetheart -- what the difference whether people get a little more morals, or a little less morals -- so long as they keep on eating mustard.

EMMA:

Ludwig! Who knows what 's become of that poor innocent child, while the father may be living in luxury with his unsuspecting wife. At least we must open her eyes.

KLINKE:

(Gasping)

Emma darling, you 'd better let that remain closed.

EMMA:

Not me. I've already started the investigation with Albert.

KLINKE:

Albert? That blood hound?

(Aside)

And Cora gives me a luck piece!

EMMA:

(Mystified)

But I can't understand. He 's not near as energetic as usual. Says he's found out things -- but it's only fair to see you first.

KLINKE:

(Says in L.)

Reg! A fine luck piece!

(Sticks it away in his pocket. To Emma.)

Emma - Emma darling - tell Gora to make that bath so scalding hot a man can't live through it.

EMMA:

I'll get it hot enough. Better call me when Albert comes.

(KLINKE in the throes of despair.)

This time, Ludwig, we're going to the bottom of things.

(Exits R.)

KLINKE:

(Rises. Looks after her. Then starts to pace the room in a fury.)

I want to see Tiedemeyer - that's all! Somebody should only send me poisoned candy, so I could feed it to Tiedemeyer.

(TIEDMEYER enters C.)

TIEDMEYER:

(Anxiously)

Klinke!

KLINKE:

And he offers his hand as if I were his friend?

TIEDMEYER:

Forgive me, Ludwig. I didn't dream.....

(KLINKE hits his head, pantomiming that Tiedemeyer's head is empty.)

But you said my lawyer.

KLINKE:

Excuse me - it's my mistake --- my mistake -- yesterday I still thought you had a little brain. Ticker -- Lawrence Tucker! Bloodhounds are after me, led by Albert. Coming any minute. Albert!

(Telling Tiedemeyer by the arm)

He's going to give me warning, before he makes it public.

TIEDMEYER:

Good heavens!

KLINKER:

Well, it 's kinder nice of him anyhow, to come and give me warning.

TIEDEMEYER:

Leave it to me -- I'll fix it.

KLINKER:

You fixed it yesterday.

TIEDEMEYER:

Now just trust to me -- I'll smooth it all over.

(EMMA re-enters R.)

EMMA:

Oh, when I heard the door I thought it was Albee. I'm on pins and needles .

TIEDEMEYER:

We ALL - are .

EMMA:

Have you heard anything ? It appears this man is well known in town.

TIEDEMEYER:

Come, Emma, be sensible . Think of this poor man.

EMMA:

Poor man? Are you forgetting that helpless child .

TIEDEMEYER:

(Letting it slip)

Hasn 't he been getting sixty dollars a month?

KLINKER:

(Almost at the same time)

No, forty.

EMMA:

Forty --sixty? What do you men know about this child?

(EACH of the MEN trying to " push" the other behind his back)

TIEDEMEYER:

Child - besh! He 's twenty-four years old.

EMMA:

And how did you know that?

TIEDEMEYER:

(Seeing his sign - signalling to Klinko - helplessly)
Well - I -- you see.....

EMMA:

(With suspicion)
Please explain!

TIEDEMEYER:

Now Emma, now see here . Those things happen every day.
Don't take it so seriously.....She was only a dancer.

EMMA:

What do you mean? Only a dancer?

TIEDEMEYER:

(Frightened)
Well I.....

KLINKO:

(Crossing - under his breath)
That darn fat fool!
(He is over L. - EMMA has her back to him - he puts his hand to his lips frantically trying to signal silence to Tiedemeyer)

EMMA:

(To Tiedemeyer)
You know more about this.....I see it on your face.

TIEDEMEYER:

I -- I...I.....not a thing.....but Ludwig.....

EMMA:

My husband? What has my husband got to do with it?

KLINKE:

Emma! Emma darling, don 't get yourself excited .

TIEDEMEYER:

Not him! Not him!! It 's all my fault .

EMMA:

Your fault?

TIEDEMEYER:

I mean, I let the cat out of the bag.

EMMA:

Tiedemeyer, are you the man?

TIEDEMEYER:

No, I.....

EMMA:

Don 't lie..... Let your conscience speak. Make a clean breast . Tell all .

TIEDEMEYER:

But, Emma! Emma it wasn 't me!

KLINKE:

It wasn 't him .

EMMA:

How should you know ? Were you THERE ?? Come in here, Tiedemeyer.

(Pointing to L.)

I went to question you alone . All alone.

TIEDEMEYER:

But Emma.

EMMA:

Albert's too slow for me.

(TIEDEMEYER hesitates)

If you don't dare to face me -- then I know the reason why.

TIEDEMEYER:

All right, Emma -- all right.

(As she KLINKE a hopeless look and follows EMMA off L.)

KLINKE:

That fat fool, he....he fixed it!

(LENA enters C.)

LENA:

Mr. Bean is outside looking for you.

KLINKE:

Albert? Good night!

(Suddenly taking out luck piece)

Who the devil gave me this!! A luck piece!!

(Nervously)

I'm busy.

LENA:

He said he must speak to you alone.

KLINKE:

(Hopeless - surrendering)

Well, what's the difference -- all right.

(LENA exits and KLINKE crosses to the keyhole to see if he can hear what Emma and Tiedemeyer are talking about. Shakes his head that he can't, crosses to entrance T. and sits)

Albert -- Albert -- what excuse -- what.....oh, let it come!!

(ALBERT BEAN enters C. He looks around cautiously, but at first does not see KLINKE. KLINKE looks up)

ALBERT:

Ludwig, are you alone?

KLINKE:

Yes, yes. Go ahead.

ALBERT:

I must have a word with you.

KLINKE:

(Rising courageously)

Out with it! Tell me you know. You know who the father is?

ALBERT:

I've carried this secret for years.

KLINKE:

What? And never whispered a word to my wife.

(Grasping his hand)

Albert, I should never have thought that of you. You know formerly I always disliked you.

ALBERT:

(Almost in tears)

But now it's bound to come out.

KLINKE:

(Moved)

The way he sympathizes with me!

ALBERT:

I've been over to Mr. Tucker's office. He has a copy of her telegram. A lawdit -- there, on the first column of the newspapers!

KLINKE:

Yes, I guess further deception is.....

ALBERT:

Useless. But Ludwig, it's only fair that the story be made public with its extenuating circumstances. We'll say that twenty-five years ago "Pink Dominoes".....

KLINKE:

(Rising)

For heaven's sake, you ain't going to make me sit here and listen to that from your lips?

ALBERT:

But you must hear it from me first, as you will soon be hearing it from all the world.

KLINKE:

(Miserably)

Now he's getting mean again.

ALBERT:

She was called the lightning bug. Morning, noon and night that girl was busy rehearsing and practising new steps. I begged her to go out to supper with me.

KLINKE:

You?

ALBERT:

Yes -- but she wouldn't. She couldn't.

KLINKE:

(Coming to him, laying an arm on his shoulder)

Yes, I know -- I know -- always busy. Albert, you're a darn lucky fellow - she was practising new steps.

ALBERT:

But she made an exception.

KLINKE:

What do you mean -- an exception?

ALBERT:

Stole a few minutes from her work.

KLINKE:

Stole?

ALBERT:

(Proudly)

I was the only man she had time to meet! On Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday afternoons.

KLINKE:

Me -- after the life I've lead to even think such a thing possible.

ALBERT:

Ludwig, dear Ludwig, I apologize. What I meant was, no man expects to be found out. I'd forgotten all about her. She told me she was going to remember me at Christmas time.

KLINKE:

Oh -- going to remember you?

ALBERT:

She did. This picture.

KLINKE:

Wrapped in holly berries?

ALBERT:

By George, you've struck it right.

KLINKE:

(Taking the picture, then looking at Albert)
Wonderful likeness.

ALBERT:

Vice president of the League -- what will they say to me?

KLINKE:

Just as bald headed as you.

(Turning over the picture)

Oh, what 's written on the back?

(Reads)

"Hello Popsie, how d'ye do,

Here's a little Christmas present for you."

(Starts to read)

ALBERT:

How can you take such a serious thing so funny?

KLINKE:

(In between his laughter)

Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.

ALBERT:

What could I do? A week before my marriage. Every month I've been sending an allowance.

KLINKE:

(Before last sentence is off Albert's lips)

How much, Albert? I'm terribly interested. How much?

ALBERT:

Seventy dollars.

KLINKE:

(Crossing - in a transport of joy)

I always said you were a rotten, bad, business man!!

ALBERT:

And worse to come -- it's going to be doubled. She needs more.

KLINKE:

(Playing the part)

Of course -- the cost of living has gone up.

ALBERT:

If that isn't exactly what she said!!! Double allowance on account of high cost of living. It'll stand me a hundred and forty.

KLINKE:

And I get off with only eighty dollars.

ALBERT:

What the devil do you mean?

KLINKE:

Oh, I got a picture just like you.

ALBERT:

Ludwig!

KLINKE:

And the same nice poetry written on back.

ALBERT:

Ludwig! For how long have you been carrying this evidence of my guilt?

KLINKE:

Since twenty-five years ago Christmas day.

ALBERT:

(As it dawns on him)
What!!

KLINKE:

(Putting his arm around him)
We two get to stand together. We doubled allowance!!

ALBERT:

(As he realizes)
Then it is your child!

KLINKE:

Oh, no, Albert - you spoke first.

ALBERT:

No, Ludwig, I give it to you.

KLINKE:

You're always giving away such nice little presents. I give it straight back.

(Taking him by the arm)
Anyway, he belongs more to you. I put up forty; you put up seventy.

ALBERT:

Ludwig, we're a couple of idiots.

KLINKE:

But always remember, dear Albert, you 're still thirty dollars more than me . And Albert, I was so afraid to see you. Now we 're partners -- stand together .

ALBERT:

No doubled allowance!!

KLINKE:

Down with the high cost of living!! That lawyer can't prove two men are both fathers. We're safe .

ALBERT:

But Emma?

KLINKE:

Well you and I and Edward Hauser are the committee to track down the father. We're safe . The two papers are the majority.

ALBERT:

Isn't it wonderful.

KLINKE:

The relief! Have a drink.

ALBERT:

Here, Ludwig, - here. I drink to your.....

KLINKE:

No, Albert! Nonsense! We're drinking to your.....

ALBERT:

No, Ludwig, I gave him to you.

KLINKE:

Wait a minute! Wait a minute, dear Albert. Why fight over it? We'll kill him.

ALBERT:

Kill him -- what do you mean?

KLINKE:

Why kill.

ALBERT:

Kill ?

KLINKE:

Ain't we the majority ? The child is dead.

ALBERT:

(Grasping Klinke's with joy)

Ludwig! Ludwig! Why have you wasted that wonderful brain on mustard? The child is dead.

(After a moment)

But Edward Hauser. He 's on the committee. What'll he say?

KLINKE:

Ain't you and I the majority?

(With mock tragedy)

Six months ago, typhoid fever ended the poor blighted life.

ALBERT:

Hurrah, the child is dead!

KLINKE:

Drink - drink - drink to the dear departed!

(LENA enters C.)

LENA:

Mr. Klinke, a young man has called!

KLINKE:

What sort of a young man?

LENA:

He was here today and yesterday.

KLINKE:

What does he want? On business ?

LENA:

No.

(Smiling at the thought of the romance)

I imagine it's something to do with family matters.

KLINKE:

Family matters?

(To Albert)

Family matters? I can't see anyone.

LENA:

Oh, I think I know what it is. After all this concerns your child.

KLINKE:

(Terrified)

What did she say? Albert!

ALBERT:

Oh foolish! You're only nervous today.

KLINKE:

What's his name -- you know?

LENA:

Yes, - Noel. I heard 'em say it 's because he was a Christmas baby.

KLINKE:

(Grasping Bean)

Albert!

ALBERT:

(Making a bound to get away R. 1st)

I'm going.

KLINKE:

(To Lena)

I won't see ANYONE.

LENA:

Oh, Mr. Klinko, think of the trouble that'd come. Mrs. Klinko, and poor dear Gora -- after all, remember, you 're a father.
 (LENA exits C.)

KLINKE:

My Gott, does everybody know!

ALBERT:

(Who has rushed to door R. 1st)
 Goodbye!

KLINKE:

(Calling frantically)
 Albert!

ALBERT:

What 's the good of a reformatory when the child is here and alive ?
 (Just as KLINKE gets to exit, ALBERT alone the door in his face and exits)
 (KLINKE turns to find NOEL standing C. NOEL laughs loudly, and stretches out his arms)

NOEL:

Father!

KLINKE:

My boy! Hush! Quiet!

NOEL:

What's the matter?

KLINKE:

It 's a terrible shock.
 (Rummaging through his pockets)
 Who the devil gives me a luck piece ?

NOEL:

(With delight)
 But you will receive me as a father should ?

KLINKE:

Hush!

(Examines doors L. and R. to see if anyone is listening)

NOEL:

Mr. Tucker said he was a very emotional man.

(To Klink)

But it couldn't be delayed forever . This moment, half of happiness, half of sorrow, must come to every father .

KLINKE:

I knew -- I knew. But we were such a happy family, my Mom, my Cora and I -- we three.

NOEL:

And now the three are four. You have a son .

KLINKE:

Well, you don't need to keep repeating that!

NOEL:

And I shall always treat you as if you were my regular father.

KLINKE:

Poor boy, he wants to be him. More like me than his mother .

NOEL:

Only say that you're perfectly satisfied with me.

KLINKE:

Well, dear boy, it's pretty late to make any alterations now.

NOEL:

That's the spirit.

(Aside)

I'm jollyng him up just as he said I should.

(Sitting on the arm of Klink's chair)

Now I'm accepted all around.

(Taking Klink's hands and dancing them)

You know my name is Noel -- I was born on Christmas day.

KLINKE:

Don 't you suppose I know that.

NOEL:

Well then

"Cheer up Popsie, how d'ye do,

Here's a little Christmas gift for you."

KLINKE:

(Rushing to door I.)

Will you hold your tongue?

(Peeks in the keyhole)

Thank heaven, they haven't overheard.

(Comes down - looks Noel over)

The image of Albert.

NOEL:

Why do you look at me so queerly ?

KLINKE:

I was looking for the likeness?

NOEL:

That's odd. Quite a quantity of people think they find a resemblance.

KLINKE:

Yes, I can easily understand that!

(Laughs)

NOEL:

And the last thing mother told me was to be sure and give her love to your wife.

KLINKE:

Are you crazy ? I'll tell her --I'll tell her . My wife is terribly busy just now, looking after the affairs of the Port or League.

NOEL:

(Proudly)

So is my mother .

KLINKE :

What? Is she a member?

NOEL:

Is she? She 's president of her local branch.

KLINKE:

That's a fine league -- I, Albert and the Lightning Bug --
that 's a fine Purity League.

(LENA enters C.)

LENA:

Mr. Klinke, your wife says the water is hot.

KLINKE:

Well run, tell her to keep it scalding/.

(LENA exits C.)

NOEL:

You see mother is so anxious that I should marry .

KLINKE:

I see. Is that why you come to me ?

NOEL:

Well, naturally. First I must get the father 's consent .

KLINKE:

Yes, I understand .

(Aside)

With it all a very good obedient son.

NOEL:

I hope you've nothing against it:

KLINKE:

No. - it 's the best thing for young folks .

NOEL:

(About to embrace him)
Father!

KLINKE:

Don't keep repeating that!

(Anxiously)

See here, young man.....

(Glancing around room)

control your feelings, my boy. What do you do for a living?

NOEL:

I'm an Egyptologist. Babylonian, Assyrian, Cuneiform
writing, and ancient inscriptions.....

KLINKE:

Boosh! You should have learnt a useful trade where you can earn
a good living.

NOEL:

But mother always said to me, "follow your own bent, my child,
even if you never earn a penny. Your father is rich enough
to always look out for you."

KLINKE:

(Between his teeth)

Hasn't she got the cute ideas now?

NOEL:

(Laughing)

And of course, now that it's a question of my marriage, he 'll
probably settle an income on me.

KLINKE:

What'll happen next?

(Angrily)

We 'll talk that over - yet - the amount.

(Crossing to C.)

We'll talk that over - yet! Those things are not so quickly
settled.

NOEL:

(To himself)

Isn't he the mercenary man?

(ALBERT BEAN enters Right lat)

ALBERT:

Listen to me, Ludwig.....

(Sees Noel)

Excuse me.

NOEL:

Good day.

ALBERT:

(Stares at him and turns to Klinks as they come down)

Who is this queer looking chap?

KLINKS:

My dear Albert, don't you know?

ALBERT:

Is it.....???

KLINKS:

It is.....

(Whispers it in his ear)

ALBERT:

Is it possible?

(Holds out his arms to Noel)

You.....you are.....my son.

(Hugs him)

NOEL: :

(Surprised - backs away and turns to Klinks)

I say now, who is this demonstrative gentleman?

KLINKS:

A relation of yours:

NOEL:

Oh! Glad to know you .
(Shakes Albert's hand)

ALBERT:

(Wiping the tears from his eyes -- moved)
 And I to see you .
(Takes hold of Noel's chin and turns his toward Klink)
 Do you see what I mean? The perfect image of you.

NOEL:

You're all quite astounding at finding resemblances.

KLINK:

(Taking NOEL by shoulder and turning him toward Albert)
 Nonsense. Look. You must see it yourself. Your nose -
 your eyes.

ALBERT:

Anyway not a bit like his mother.

NOEL:

Do you know my mother?

ALBERT:

Slightly.
(Winking at Klink)

KLINK:

Albert, you 'll be pleased to hear -- she too belongs to the
 Purity League.

ALBERT:

What?

KLYNKE:

Yes -- she 's only President of her branch.

ALBERT:

Marvellous!

KLYNKE:

(Circling his arm through Albert's)

And Albert -- I know you'll be more pleased to hear, now that the boy is going to marry, his dear mother says that his father will have to settle an income on him.

ALBERT:

The devil you say!

NOEL:

(Coming to him pleasantly)

Oh, a much better downy than mother receives. She says it's necessary the way the cost of living has gone up.

ALBERT:

The high cost of living! And I voted the Democratic ticket!

KLYNKE:

So did I.

(Suddenly looking out the window)

There's Edward coming! Good heavens -- if the minority should catch the majority with their son.

ALBERT:

(To Noel)

Wait here! And don 't say a word .

KLYNKE:

(To Noel)

Better put on your hat and hurry -- meet me at noon at my office, 139 Market Street -- we 'll have lunch.

ALBERT:

My dear boy!

KLINKE:

We'll side-track Edward and take him into the library.

(Starts to exit, suddenly recollects)

Where's my life preserver?

(Crosses to table - picks up shawl. KLINKE and TAY exit hastily)

NOEL:

(In a daze)

I wonder. I wonder if I've done it rightly.

(Pauses - thinks)

Still, they couldn't have treated me kinder -- if I'd been their own son.

(ROSE enters J.)

ROSE:

Oh, my dear! Noel, what's the matter?

NOEL:

I've just spoken to your father.

ROSE:

Well?

NOEL:

I'm accepted. Treated me splendid. He calls me son already.

ROSE:

(Elated)

Noel! Oh, you're getting to do things so wonderfully quick. Why just this minute I saw him coming up the street.

NOEL:

Oh no -- we had quite a chat. Excellent friends. Going to have lunch together, this noon.

ROSE:

Oh Noel, my happiness is complete! Now I do believe in fortune-tellers.

NOEL:

I wonder if I can find my way? What can I take to get to 139 Market Street?

ROSE:

139 Market Street? The Milwaukee Mustard Company?? Uncle Klinker?? I thought you spoke to father.

NOEL:

He is your father, isn't he?

ROSE:

Of course not. Mr. Father is Edward Hauser, the brewer.

NOEL:

(Down in the dumps)

Rose! Oh, Rose! Dear heart, a rose with any other name would please me just the same. And you've not Miss Klinker?

ROSE:

(A bit sore)

Pretty nearly time you knew my name, considering you've going to marry me.

NOEL:

Oh, what a world full of trouble! Last night I cried my mother that at first sight I loved Miss Klinker.

ROSE:

Great heavens! - you 'll have to correct the mistake --
speak to my father.

NOEL:

(Terrified)

Again? Before I do, I'll have to swallow another chocolate
and malted milk.

ROSE:

Not, dear heart, you were successful the first time -- and my
father ----

NOEL:

(Exiting with her)

Oh, I always have to do twice the work -- to get half the results.

(They exit C.)

(At the same time KLINKE peeks in from L.)

KLINKE:

It's all right . Thank heaven, he 's gone .

(ALBERT DEAN and EDWARD HAUSER enter from L.)

EDWARD:

Yes, I just hurried from your house, dear Albert, to see
whether you had any success in discovering that worthless father .

DEAN:

Edward, you know me -- night and day I've worked . But
unfortunately - most unfortunately my best efforts have led to
nothing.

(Each secretly shows delight)

KLINKE:

And I -- I -- I've worked myself sick on this case .

EDWARD:

Then it seems to me, gentlemen -- that if three energetic souls like us can uncover nothing, it must be put down....as an insolvable mystery.

(KLINKE and ALBERT relieved that Edward is being so easily handled - and a little puzzled by it)

KLINKE:

I think that's a very fine suggestion! What do you say, Albert?

ALBERT:

My dear Klinks, you took the words out of my mouth.

EDWARD:

Then, gentlemen, if that is the opinion of the majority, I will be glad to make the report -- unanimous.

(Grooves with a broad smile. Humming a gay tune between his lips, he is tickled that they are not causing him trouble)

KLINKE:

(Aside to Albert)

It's a wonderful thing to have a majority.

EDWARD:

And as for the child.....

KLINKE:

I've a suggestion -- I've heard

(ALL THREE put their heads together)

EDWARD:

(Alarmed)
What?

KLINKE:

It's secret where I heard it from -- but there's a rumor that the poor child is done with the troubles of life.

ALBERT:

Klinks! -- curious! I heard that identical news from private sources -- that the child is dead.

EDWARD:

(Overjoyed)

Gentlemen, there!.....there you've uncovered a most reassuring detail.

KLINKE:

In fact so sure am I, that I'd be almost ready to report that the poor child.....What do you say, Albert?

ALBERT:

I don't think there's any question of it.

(Anxiously)

But how do you feel, Edward?

EDWARD:

Gentlemen, as the great American dollar says -- in the union there is strength. If that be the opinion of you two members I should consider it my sacred duty to make the report -- unanimous.

(KLINKE and ALBERT breathe a sigh of tremendous relief --

EDWARD crosses congratulating himself)

KLINKE:

(Clearing his throat - Oratorically)

Then, fellow members, - this committee will report -- after a searching, and pains-taking investigation; it is unable to trace a single clue of the worthless father. But we are happy to add, that a kinder - a better - er - er

EDWARD:

Providence

KLINKE:

A kinder Providence has taken the child -- home forever.

ALBERT:

By George, Klinke, you should have been City Alderman!

EDWARD:

(Taking Klinke's hand)

I think, gentlemen, we can congratulate ourselves - we've done a good day's work.

ALBERT:

(Grasping Hauser's hand)
With searching thoroughness.

KLINKE:

(Twining his hands with the other two so that they form a circle)
And entirely satisfactory -- all around.
(As the THREE MEN stand with clasped hands EMMA enters L.)

EMMA:

My dear Edward, have you.....

EDWARD:

Unfortunately, dear Emma, even we three are at our wits' ends. It would seem that the man we're searching for, has disappeared from the face of the earth.

EMMA:

So? Well then -- I'll tell you.

ALBERT:

(Alarmed - to Klink)
Good Lord, she knows.

KLINKE:

(To Bean)
Stick by me.

EDWARD:

(Over L.)
Now they'll find me out.

EMMA:

You would never believe it possible.

EDWARD:

Who is it?

EMMA:
A member of my own family.

ALBERT:
She means me.

CLINKE:
(Aside to Albert)
No, me!

EDWARD:
(His lips just mumbling)
Me!
(To Emma)
Our family?

EMMA:
Yes. He confessed it here himself. Uncle Tiedemeyer.
(Enter TIEDEMEYER I. hanging his head)

ALBERT:
Tiedemeyer!

CLINKE:
Tiedemeyer!
(CLINKE and ALBERT double up with laughter)

EDWARD:
You, Anthony!

EMMA:
I forced him to confess. Now what do you say?

EDWARD:
(To Tiedemeyer)
You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Anthony!

ALBERT:
Tiedemeyer, I never want to look on your sicked face again.

KLINKE:

And as for me -- me -- Tiedemeyer, I'm too moved to speak.

BOBA:

(As she exits)

Now, I'll ring up the ladies of the Executive Board and the whole town shall know.

(Exits G.)

KLINKE:

Tiedemeyer, what's the meaning? Are you shouldering the blame to save me?

TIEDEMEYER:

Oh, Ludwig, I could bluff you, but I couldn't bluff that wife of yours. I've been secretly carrying one of those pictures for twenty-five years -- and sending sixty dollars.....

ALBERT:

Ten dollars cheaper than me.

KLINKE:

(Tickled)

I'm still low man.

TIEDEMEYER:

When you confessed yesterday I thought that was my way out -- so I kept mum. Up to yesterday I thought I was the only guilty one. Oh, the score, that she made an exception in my case -- that for my sake she stole a few minutes from her rehearsals -- from ten to twelve in the morning.

KLINKE:

Can you beat it?

TIEDEMEYER:

(Angrily)

But now, don't think I'm going to take the blame alone! Ludwig, you've confessed to me -- you've got to share it.

KLINGS:

If I have to share it, Albert has to share it too -- He confessed to me.

EDWARD:

(Suddenly facing the three. With self righteousness)
What? The three? And I've been serving on the same
committee with you three reprobates!

KLINGS:

Don't you try to give us any -- we three are a majority.
And look what it cost us. Forty -

WIDEGYER:

Sixty

ALBERT:

Seventy.....Funny she skipped fifty.

KLINGS:

Oh, Edward, stick with us -- some day you may need a friend!

EMMA:

(Re-entering excitedly)
I've phoned - phoned the news to each of the women on the
committee and they're going to find the child.

KLINGS:

My dear Emma -- wait, wait -- prepare for a shock!

EMMA:

What do you mean? That the poor child is

KLINGS:

You've guessed it from my voice.

ALBERT:

Dead!

KLINGBE:

Yes, he has been gathered to his fathers

(Through door G. NOEL is seen approaching, ROSE urging him on. Suddenly she pushes him into room and disappears down hallway)

NOEL:

(Timidly)

Please excuse me if I disturb you.

ALBERT:

(Furious)

There he is!

KLINGBE:

(Flabbergasted)

The devil! What comes now?

WHEEL:

(To Klinks)

Mr. Klinks, I've made an awful mistake -- I find you are not....

EMMA:

What?

NOEL:

(Looking around embarrassed)

Could any of you tell me which one is Mr. Hauser?

EDWARD:

(Surprised)

Who are you, sir? I'm Hauser.

NOEL:

(Stretching out his arms to him)

Father!

(Hugs him)

TIEDENBERG:

Providence!

ELINOR:

(To Albert)

No wonder -- he was always uncertain.

NOEL:

Aren't you going to receive me as a father should?

EDWARD:

Who told you to call me father?

NOEL:

(Flustered)

Why, that's what Mr. Lawrence Tucker.....

EDWARD:

(Sinking into a chair)

My God, he's betrayed my secret. I told him the whole story and.....Oh friends, friends.....

MAMA:

Then you -- you --.....and the ladies committee -- they're spreading the wrong news.

(She exits C.)

ELINOR:

Edward, what does this mean?

EDWARD:

I -- I'm the missing link -- I'm the missing fifty.

ELINOR:

What?

EDWARD:

Listen. -- Twenty-five years ago on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon.....

(ALL three men interrupt him)

KLINKE: TIEDEMEYER: ALBERT:
 I got off the cheapest- Lend me a pencil. Where's my fountain
 it cost me..... pen.

(The FOUR MEN get busy borrowing pencils and pulling out
 the back of envelopes to write on)

KLINKE: EDWARD: TIEDEMEYER: ALBERT:
 12 times 40 times 12 times 50 times 12 times 60 12 times 70
 25..... 25. times 25. times 25.

(KLINKE figuring and scratching his head. EDWARD buried
 over his figures. TIEDEMEYER looking up in the air to do
 mental arithmetic. ALBERT biting the end of his pencil --
 ALL FOUR MEN working frantically while NOEL gazes on in
 absolute bewilderment)

KLINKE: EDWARD: TIEDEMEYER: ALBERT:
 12,000. 15,000. 19,000. 21,000.

(During the following the expression of each man must be
 distinctive. KLINKE sits back, fingers in armpits of
 his vest, tickled at getting off the cheapest. EDWARD
 nodding and rocking to and fro, the picture of ease as he
 thinks over his vanished money. TIEDEMEYER gives Albert
 a look as much as to say: "You're the biggest sucker of 'em
 all" - then as he turns and sees KLINKE smiling, his whole
 facial expression changes and he sinks his hands in his arms.
 ALBERT, after getting the "Ha, ha!" from each one of them,
 turns his chair away, drops pencil and paper and sits back
 in hopeless dejection. Meanwhile, NOEL, who has listened
 as in a daze too frightened to speak, rushes down to G. as
 if to exit. He runs plumb into the arms of LAMINGTON TUCKER
 who is entering)

NOEL:
 For the Lord's sake, who are these four book-keepers?

TUCKER:
 Why, my boy, they're your ancestors -- they're your YANK
ancestors.

C U R T A I N .

E. NASH,



BROADWAY,
or 37th Street,
NEW YORK

PS

3525

A522H5

1914

--:-- THE HIGH COST OF LOVING --:--

A C T I I I

-- THE HIGH COST OF LOVING --

ACT III.

PS 3525
.A522 H5
1914

JAN 29 1914

©CLD 35810

DISCOVERED: ALBERT, EDWARD, TIEDEMEYER each putting
their envelope with calculations in their
inside vest pocket. At the rise, KLINKE
re-enters C. His coat mussed, his hair
ruffled.

KLINKE:

Out! I've thrown him out.

ALBERT:

Thrown him out?

KLINKE:

The front door.

EDWARD:

(Rising, getting his hat)
Now I must get hold of my wife - put the whole blame on Tiede-
meyer.

TIEDEMEYER:

But let me suggest.....

KLINKE:

Tiedemeyer, you've made enough suggestions. You can stand
the blame. Ain't you the bachelor?

ALBERT:

(As he gets his hat and coat - to Tiedemeyer)
You go to some other city - out West - the wilds of Canada -
South America.

KLINKE:

And to make it up to you - don't we pay you the allowance we
formerly paid her?

EDWARD:

You profit by the high cost of living.

(As he fills his pockets with cigars)
 Goodbye, dear Klinke.

TIEDENMYER:

(With a deep sigh)
 Peru - Brazil - in my old days - Brazil!

KLINKE:

Nonsense! God's own country. They raise the finest mustard in the world.

TIEDENMYER:

(Sadly and weakly)
 I don't know whether it's worth the money.

EDWARD:

Come on. Goodbye.

KLINKE:

(Again merry)
 Now up in my room - tear up the receipts - burn up the picture - and whew ----- I'm a free man again.

(TIEDENMYER, EDWARD and ALBERT start to door C. - KLINKE crosses to door, R.)

TIEDENMYER:

Write to me sometime -- in Brazil.

(THYExit)

(Just as KLINKE opens door, R. he runs into CORA hat and coat on)

CORA:

Papa, where you rushing to?

KLINKE:

It's all right -- the country's saved. No more worrying over the high cost of living.

(He rushes out)

(As CORA stands staring after him, LENA enters C.)

CORA:

Lena, is my bag packed?

LENA:

Everything. Miss Rose is here.

CORA:

Lena - not a word - - not even to Rose!'

(ROSE enters O.)

ROSE:

Cora, - going out - where?

CORA:

Oh -er - just out. Oh, Rose, at last I've gotten rid of him.

ROSE:

Rid of whom?

CORA:

That milksop professor. I saw it from my window - father threw him out.

ROSE:

What did he do? What????

CORA:

Threw him out. Bag and baggage:

ROSE:

Heavens --- did he hurt himself?

LENA:

Not much....He's such a nice boy. And he seems to mean right.

ROSE:

(Wiping away the tears)

I should think he does.

(CONRA and LENA look at her surprised)

LENA:

Oh - ah ----

CONRA:

Why, Rose, I never suspected for a second....

ROSE:

Didn't he leave me any message?

LENA:

His last words were - he'd come back if he died in the attempt.

(NOEL, a little the worse for hard usage, carrying his travelling bag, enters C. at cue: "died". He comes down)

NOEL:

And here I am!

ROSE:

Noel! What does it all mean?

NOEL:

How should I know? I went to your father - just like you told me - and stretched out my arms and

ROSE:

Just like Mr. Tucker told you?

NOEL:

Exactly. Precisely.

(Mystified)

And the four of 'em - they all seemed to have a grudge against me.

(Miserably)

Why, I've never done anyone any harm -- in my whole life.

ROSE:

Oh, there's some mistake - somewhere.

NOEL:

There can't be. I marked every direction down on my cuff.

ROSE:

Maybe you changed your shirt?

NOEL:

No.

(Shows her the cuff)

See. And now I am on my way to the depot. But I couldn't leave without a respectful goodbye. Shall we never meet again?

ROSE:

And we were going to be so happy.

NOEL:

We might have been the Cupid and Psyche of modern times.

NOEL:

We could have set the world an example.

ROSE:

We were so congenial. we were never going to quarrel or fight
(OCRA motions LENA to leave the lovers alone. During following they stand a moment looking at them, then softly tiptoe to the door - just as NOEL and ROSE kiss they give each other a look of amazement and slip out)

NOEL:

Life was to be one long lingering kiss.

(ROSE lays her hand on his lips)

And kiss.

(Kisses her)

And kiss --

(Same play)

ROSE:

(Sighing)

Ah, dear!

NOEL:

(Same play)

And I had pictured it all so wonderful. Our marriage.

ROSE:

Our honeymoon.

NOEL:

We were to spend days and days, hand in hand, in the Egyptian museum. We were to sit on the sofa and I was going to tell you all about Geradish and Ptolemy the II.

ROSE:

The son of Ashurish the IV.

NOEL:

Why, you know ALL about them!

ROSE:

I've been very busy these last few days.

NOEL:

Meeting my friends for my sake.

(Hugs her)

Ah, Rose!

ROSE:

Noel!

(They clasp)

(KLINKE enters C. with bundle of papers, smiling with relief. Suddenly looks up at the sound of the kiss)

KLINKE:

Well, if that don't beat the Dutch's!

(ROSE rushes out, R. KLINKE, excitedly to Noel)

Heh? This? What? What is this?



NOEL:

A kiss.

KLINGE:

Like I didn't see it? Such a nuisance! As if two minutes ago I didn't have you thrown out.

NOEL:

Entirely unjustified. You didn't give me a chance to explain -
(Angrily)
I'm losing my patience.

KLINGE:

Me, too? What you mean by such carryings on? Here - kissing Rose? And good old Edward, you call him "father".

NOEL:

Well, that's quite correct. I want to marry Rose.

KLINGE:

(In a rage)
What -- you -- want? You -- you --! Have you turned crazy?
You don't seem to realise who you are. I don't allow that.

NOEL:

You act as if you had some control over me?
(EMMA'S VOICE heard off calling: "Ludwig!")

KLINGE:

Emma? My wife. I can't let her see you.

NOEL:

Why not?

KLINGE:

(Imitated)
Don't be so fearfully inquisitive. Go in there.

(Pushes him off L.)
Here's your grip.
(Throws it after him, crosses door, and crosses with a broad smile to greet EMMA who enters G.)

EDNA:

Ludwig, ah here you are! Ludwig!.....

KLINCK:

(Overdoing his assumed affection)

What can I do for you, my little gold fish?

(His eyes stray towards the door, L.)

EDNA:

I just come from Edward's. He is beside himself. In our house such things to happen. Where is that young man? Where's he gone to?

KLINCK:

(Gaily)

I should worry!

EDNA:

What did he mean by calling Edward "father"?

KLINCK:

(Nervously)

Ash! got a bad habit of calling people, father. Everybody. To me, too.

EDNA:

To you?

KLINCK:

(More nervous)

Yes. He - he got a mother. So he'd like - you can't blame him - also to get a father. Everybody got a father except him. I don't know, lost, strayed or stolen. So he keeps calling everyone he meets - father - father - father --- and he hopes someone will speak up and say "I'm it". Well, he got no luck and er - or - when he saw Edward -- Ah that was just the kind of a father he always wanted.

(Crosses)

Phew!

EMMA:

But Edward ought to know of this. He and his wife are all excited.

KLINKE:

(Glad to get an excuse to exit)

I go right and phone to him. Be right back, my little gold fish.

(Exits G.)

(EMMA stands nodding her head suspiciously)

EMMA:

There's something about him - there's something about that fellow Klink - kind of a fishy story - so anxious to phone---

(A KNOCK at door, L.)

Who's knocking?

NOEL:

(Heard off)

It's all a mistake. I shan't stay here.

EMMA:

Who is that?

(Opens door)

What? You, young man? What do you want here? He ain't got no fathers. Who are you anyway?

NOEL:

(Fishing a card out of his pocket)

Noel Burnham.

EMMA:

Burnham? Not Noel? Mathilda's son???

NOEL:

Certainly.

EMMA:

(Almost throwing her arms around him)

Why, I've been expecting you since yesterday.

(Looking at his valise)

I didn't see your valise before. Did you just come?

NOEL:

I was just trying to no?

EMMA:

Oh, you mustn't go.

(Takes his valise and holds his hand)

Some little misunderstanding. It'll all be explained.

(KLINKE enters C. and sees EMMA holding Noel's hand)

KLINKE:

Well - what the devil?

EMMA:

Ludwig, why didn't you tell me who he was?

KLINKE:

You know? Emma - you found out?

EMMA:

Of course. I arranged it all.

KLINKE:

You?

EMMA:

It was to be a surprise for you.

KLINKE:

A surprise? It is!

EMMA:

Why, I invited him to come here.

KLINKE:

You?

EMMA:

Yes. I expected him - his mother had written me.

KLINKE:

Do you know his mother?

NOEL:

I told you she did. Didn't I ask you to give her my mother's love --- and you stuck me in that other room.

EMMA:

Oh! And I promised his mother to treat him like my own son.

KLINKE:

(As he crosses)

If she only knew, who the mother really is.

EMMA:

(Apologetically, to Noel)

My husband - you know he - careless - but he don't mean to harm by it. You must be our guest.

NOEL:

But my dear lady.....

EMMA:

Now don't say a word. You're going to stay right here.

KLINKE:

(With a gulp)

That's what I told him.

NOEL:

But er - -

EMMA:

Why, we wouldn't let you go for anything in the world. You'll be very happy to have him with us, won't you, Ludwig?

KLINKE:

Nothing could make me happier.

LENA:

(Enters)

Mrs. Klink, there's a lady for you in the parlor.

EMMA:

Excuse me a moment. Now not another word. I'll put the guest room in order.

(To Klink)

Now, Ludwig, make up for your impoliteness.

KLING:

Leave it to me.

EMMA:

(Exiting)

I know you can persuade him to stay.

KLING:

(Wait until EMMA has gone out, G.)

You little devil - you got to get out of here - a train leaves..

NOEL:

You're expecting too much of me - first I'm determined to see Rose's father.

KLING:

Then why don't you go hang around his house - right around the corner - 342 Chestnut Street.

NOEL:

(Writing on his cuff)

342 Chestnut Street - ah - now I've got his number.

(ALBERT enters through porch door, Right Front)

ALBERT:

Your wife was on the steps, Ludwig, so I slipped in by the porch.

(Suddenly spying Noel)

He? Back again?

KLINGER:

A regular lead penny.

NOEL:

342 Chestnut Street -- I'm.....

KLINGER:

(Getting in front of him)

No, you don't see my wife -- if you go -- go by the porch door.

NOEL:

(Starting towards door Right Front)

Isn't there a drug store around here - if I remember right?

KLINGER:

One on the corner.

NOEL:

(Exiting)

First I shall swallow a chocolate and malted milk.

KLINGER:

(To Albert)

Well - my wife knows all about it.

ALBERT:

Him? The boy?

KLINGER:

She invited him.

ALBERT:

What? Impossible?

KLINGER:

Not at all. She met his mother.

ALBERT:

(Terrified)

When? Where?

KLINKE:

How should I know -- one of her trips to New York.

ALBERT:

The Lightning Bug?

KLINKE:

His mother.

ALBERT:

But your wife don't know who she formerly was.

KLINKE:

Of course not.

(With a glum face)

Not yet! Don't you see The Lightning Bug's scheme?
First she works to get the son in here? Feels my wife.

ALBERT:

She could teach the devil tricks.

KLINKE:

The next thing we know, we'll have her herself - the Lightning Bug!

ALBERT:

By golly, Klinke!

KLINKE:

On our hands. And both here --- living right in our house -
then she has us in the palm of her hand.

ALBERT:

What's to be done? Yield to the high cost of living?

KLINKE:

No. One of us has got to go straight in New York!

ALBERT:

And see her?

KLINKE:

Yes - and you're the one.

BEAN:

Me? New York?

KLINKE:

Yes, you. See her! After twenty-five years I wouldn't know her from the side of a barn -- so you.....

ALBERT:

Either would I. She's probably fat and changed.....

KLINKE:

Well, ain't you got her name? -- Can't you ask for her?

ALBERT:

But The Lightning Bug.....

KLINKE:

(Impatiently)

Don't talk so loud here - come in the library. You'll be able to find her.

ALBERT:

(Irritably)

Well, what good will that do?

KLINKE:

What? I'll tell you. You either get to buy her off -- or kill her off.

(They exit in library, L.)

(At the same time, EMMA enters from C. with her arm around a stout, middle-aged, dowdy dressed woman)

EMMA:

Well, my dear Mrs. Burnham - this is a surprise. And where's your husband?

MATHILDA:

He stopped in at the drug store. I left my silver purse on the train, and he wanted to phone immediately to the lost and found office.

EMMA:

Do take off your things. It's such a surprise to see you.

MATHILDA:

Didn't you expect me? Why my son wired he had fallen in love with your daughter at first sight.

EMMA:

What?

MATHILDA:

Here's the wire.

EMMA:

Well, it all must have happened yesterday. Gora never whispered a word to me.

MATHILDA:

Isn't that like young people - so secretive.

EMMA:

I suppose they settled it themselves and wanted to wait till you came so as to tell us together. Sweet of them.

MATHILDA:

Lovely of them. And what does your husband say to my son?

EMMA:

I didn't even tell him why Noel was coming. It'll be a complete surprise.

MATHILDA:

Really?

EMMA:

Klinke has such queer ideas. Only yesterday he was saying matches made by mothers were all right in the old country, but American girls ought to be allowed to do their own choosing.

(Confidentially)

So I told my brothers about it - but I was sort of afraid to let Klinke know why I had invited Noel.

MATHILDA:

But now when it's all turned out so happily.....

EMMA:

Oh, he'll be overjoyed. Ludwig's a good fellow -- but a wife has to know just how little she can tell her husband.

MATHILDA:

You know I think I've met him.

EMMA:

My husband?

MATHILDA:

Yes, as a young girl -- about twenty-five years ago. I tell you how I happen to remember. My dear father took me on a trip here to Milwaukee.

EMMA:

Dear old Judge Peckham.

MATHILDA:

Well, I met your husband - he was single then. And I remember so well - he was trying to show me some dancing steps.

EMMA:

Ludwig -- my mustard friend -- I never knew he had any dancing in his bones!

MATHILDA:

Oh, it seems that a couple of weeks before he had learned some new steps from a regular, professional dancer.

EMMA:

My Ludwig?

MATHILDA:

And he was trying to teach me all that he had learnt. We had such fun. After twenty-five years I wonder if he'll remember the occasion.

(LUDWIG peeks through door L. - EMMA catches him)

EMMA:

Ah, Ludwig - Ludwig?

KLINCK:

Yes, my dear.

(KLINCK closes door - signals ALBERT to stay there and come down)

EMMA:

Ludwig,

(Points to Mathilda)

do you know who this is?

KLINCK:

(Looking at her)

No.

EMMA:

Now take a good look, dearie.

KLINCK:

(Aside)

I don't like her sweetie tone.

MATHILDA:

I'd remember you at once, Mr. Klinks.

EMMA:

Now think -- think hard, Ludwig.

KLINKS:

(Nervous)

Ach, Emma, today -- today, I got no head on me.

MATHILDA:

(Sweetly)

Well, go back twenty-five years.

KLINKS:

(Dazed)

Twenty-five.....

EMMA:

Oh, give the poor man a clue!

MATHILDA:

Don't you remember my dancing?

(Takes a pose)

KLINKS:

Dance? That step??

(Exalted)

Oh, it can't be possible!

MATHILDA:

Yes, it is. And I do want to thank you for being so good to my son.

KLINKS:

Your son?

EMMA:

Noel. -- You were just talking to him.

KLINKE:

What -- you -- are ---

MATHILDA:

Yes -- Noel is my little Christmas baby.

KLINKE:

Great heavens! The family is complete.

EMMA:

(To Mathilda)

Completer than he knows. A lovely engagement.

(To Klinker)

You didn't expect to see her, did you, Ludwig?

KLINKE:

No! but nothing surprises me any longer.

EMMA:

I got to ring up some of Cora's friends ----

(To Mathilda)

I'll see that your room is all right. I guess you and Ludwig.....

MATHILDA:

Oh, we'll have great fun talking over old times.

KLINKE:

(To Mathilda)

Hush! Not before my wife.

EMMA:

Nothing I like so much as company in the house.

(Exits E.)

KLINKE:

(Angrily)

Well! Your telegram wasn't enough - the high cost of living - you had to come yourself.

MATHILDA:

Why, your wife has often invited me.

KLINKE:

Am I going crazy? First she falls on the boy's neck.....

MATHILDA:

Are you speaking of my son? Oh, there's going to be a great surprise for you, and a happy one.

KLINKE:

Where would I get any happiness from?

MATHILDA:

Ah, but this concerns the future of our children.

KLINKE:

Our children? How do I know -- forty - fifty - sixty - seventy ----

MATHILDA:

What do you mean?

KLINKE:

Edward, Albert - Tiedemayer.

MATHILDA:

What are you talking about ????

KLINKE:

Every minute he gets another father, - he has four now.

MATHILDA:

Mr. Klinkel this may be a joke. But I'm not used to jokes of that kind.

KLINKE:

No?

MATHILDA:

And not even in your case will I make an exception.

KLINKE:

Say, leave me alone - you've made enough exceptions.
First Albert Bean ----

MATHILDA:

Albert Bean? I never heard of him.

KLINKE:

Oh, no - of course not - fifty dollars -- that's very good.
But it was all hunky-dorsey when he was willing to pay.

MATHILDA:

(Gasping)

Mr. Klink, are you intoxicated? Where's your wife?

(Starts to exit)

KLINKE:

Oh, no --- you don't see her again.

(Takes hold of her shoulder)

MATHILDA:

(Pulling away)

Don't you touch me! You rude man. Heaven knows what you've
done with my boy! My Noel!

KLINKE:

Here right around the corner. Visiting Edward Hauser

MATHILDA:

Albert Hauser? Why, I knew him as a girl.

KLINKE:

I should say so---sixty dollars. Tuesday, Thursday and
Saturday.

MATHILDA:

Mr. Klinker!

KLINKE:

342 Chestnut Street.

(Handling her her hat)
Why don't you go?

MATHILDA:

(Astounded. Not knowing which way to turn)

Mr. Klinker!

(At that moment ALBERT enters from library)

ALBERT:

Well,

MATHILDA:

(Relieved)

Thank heavens, someone!

KLINKE:

Bean! Ha, ha! Now we'll have it out.

(To Bean)

You know who this is?

ALBERT:

(Looking at MATHILDA who is putting on her hat)
Haven't the slightest idea.

KLINKE:

Why, my dear Albert, it's.....

(Whispers in his ear)

ALBERT:

(Terrified)

Impossible!

KLINKE:

Is anything impossible? There she stands.

ALBERT:

(Throws his arms around Mathilda and kisses her)
 Clarabelle!

MATHILDA:

(With a cry)

You're both mad! Where am I? My husband? My son?
 Help! Help!

KLINGEN:

If you don't like us - give Edward Shuster a little surprise.

ALBERT:

Making a fuss like this!

KLINGEN:

As if she'd never been kissed.

MATHILDA:

Your wife!

KLINGEN:

(Preventing her from exiting, C.)
 Oh, no, you don't!

MATHILDA:

(Rushing out porch door, R. first)
 Godfrey shall hear of this -- that's all -- that's all.
 (Exits)

ALBERT:

Does your wife know who she is?

KLINGEN:

Oh, Emma was sweet enough to bring her here.

ALBERT:

And I was going to New York to stop her?

(TIEDENMYER enters C.)

TIEDENMYER:

Hello, everyone. My train leaves in twenty minutes.

KLINKE & ALBERT:

Hello!

TIEDENMYER:

I want to be out of town when the storm breaks. And in two days there's a steamer for Peru.

KLINKE:

No.

TIEDENMYER:

I've written a confession, taking the whole blame. And the child is dead.

KLINKE:

Is it? He's very much alive.

ALBERT:

And his mother has come.

TIEDENMYER:

The Lightning Bug?

KLINKE:

Yes, the Lightning Bug. She's just flown out of the room.

TIEDENMYER:

Then the truth will come out anyway. Why should I go to Brazil?

KLINKE:

But, Anthony.....

TIEDEMAYER:

She here - the son here - that old devil has you in the palm of her hand. She'll make you double the allowance - and then there'll be nothing left for me.

KLINKE:

But Tiedemeyer.....

TIEDEMAYER:

No. No Brazil. Never. I'm through with the whole business. You can all look for another father.

(NOEL enters G. followed by GODFREY BURNHAM)

KLINKE:

Back again -- the lead penny.

ALBERT:

Who's he got with him?

GODFREY:

Excuse me, gentlemen, ferryaching in on you like this, but I must speak to Mr. Klinke.

KLINKE:

What do you want with me?

GODFREY:

(Coming down with NOEL)

We ran into each other at the drug store.. I want to know what you mean by treating this young man in that fashion? I demand an explanation.

KLINKE:

Don't get yourself excited. What business of yours?

GODFREY:

Excuse me, you don't seem to know who I am.

KLINKE:

No, I don't. And what is this young man to you?

GODFREY:

I'm his father.

(KLINGE, ALBERT and TIMOTHY double up with laughter)

KLINGE:

You!

ALBERT:

Still another!

KLINGE:

The quartet is a quintette.

TIMOTHY:

No Brazil for me.

GODFREY:

What are you talking about, gentlemen?

KLINGE:

(Grasping his hand warmly)

My dear friend! Are you in this, too?

GODFREY:

What do you mean?

KLINGE:

(Pointing to Noel)

His mother. Don't worry! I'm in it, too. -- forty.

TIMOTHY:

Sixty.

ALBERT:

Seventy.

GODFREY:

Gentlemen, are you talking about my wife?
 (ALBERT and KLINCKE shout with laughter)

KLINCKE:

Your wife? Wife? -- He actually married her?

GODFREY:

How dare you!

KLINCKE:

(Goodnaturedly)

Oh, it's all right -- it's all right. We're free! -- free!
 You should worry!

(Enter EMMA in a handsome dress. Goes Godfrey and goes
 towards him)

EMMA:

Ah, my dear Mr. Burnham. You've met my husband?

KLINCKE:

We have. And I was never so tickled to see anyone in my life.

TIEDENBACHER:

Me, too.

EMMA:

I've just phoned to a few of Gera's friends, telling them the
 happy.....

GODFREY:

Just a moment. As to the future of my son.....

KLINCKE:

Well?

GODFREY:

As I am his father....

KLINKE:

We have something to say about that.....
(Comes down with TIMMEYER and ALBERT)

GODFREY:

You? What business?

KLINKE:

Yes --- the majority. Now what about this young man?

EMMA:

(Angrily)

Why, dearie, he's going to marry our Cora.

KLINKE:

Emma, get a doctor -- call a doctor! I'm suffering a nervous breakdown --- my mind is giving away.

GODFREY:

(To Emma)

One moment, if you think that I could consent to this.....

KLINKE:

Or I.

TIMMEYER & ALBERT:

Or we!

KLINKE:

Then all of us are of the same mind.

EMMA:

Why I phoned to Cora's friends. A little reception. I've invited all of the ladies of the Parity League.

(MATHILDA rushes in, followed by EDWARD HAUSER. She crosses immediately to Godfrey)

MATHILDA:

Oh, Godfrey --- why weren't you at the drug store?

GOODRICH:

I met Noel and we went down to get the bag -- here--!

EDWARD:

Klinky!--she came rushing to me frantic. Ludwig, why have you been so rude? And has Albert lost his senses? Insulting this lady?

KLINKIE:

(Laughing)

This lady - eighteen thousand - and you don't know who this lady is?

EDWARD:

I've known her from childhood. I studied law for a time with her father.

KLINKIE:

Her father?

EDWARD:

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. - Judge Peckham.

KLINKIE:

Judge Peckham? And she's not.....

ALBERT:

And I kissed her!

IRMA:

Ludwig, what do you mean by such rudeness? Her son is engaged to our Cora. I fixed it all, and kept it as a little secret.

KLINKIE:

(Assuming anger)

What? A secret? Then how should I dream that --- Naturally, I didn't understand what our dear friend here, was talking about. You, with your secrets! It's your fault, Irma. All your fault.

ROSIE:

But, Ludwig

KLINKE:

Now Rosie, I don't like to scold you before company - but letting me misunderstand such a lovely lady. Now you could keep a secret from me - a husband like me, what tells his wife everything.

ROSIE:

Well, perhaps it was a bit foolish. But, Ludwig.....

LUDWIG:

It's what I've always said, and what I've always practised, and what I hoped you'd learn from me -- a husband and wife must never keep a secret from each other.

NOEL:

(Who has exited during former scenes, re-enters L. with ROSE and crosses to Edward)

At last, Mr. Hauser!

EDWARD:

What do you want now?

SARAHILDA:

This is my son .

EDWARD:

(Suddenly very polite)

Your son? My dear young friend! But what did you mean by calling me father?

NOEL:

Why, Mr. Hauser, I wanted to marry your daughter Rose!

(REVELATION)

KLINKE:

Rose!

EMMA:

Not Cora?

EDWARD:

My daughter!

MATHILDA:

But you wired us that.....

NOEL:

It was a mistake. I met Miss Rose first.

EMMA:

And I phoned the society editor - and invited all the ladies of the purity league.

NOEL:

But I sent you another telegram -- I -- I -- to be sure I wouldn't forget it, I put it in the rim of my hat.

ROSE:

(Coming down with his hat)

And here it is, dear heart -- still in the rim of your hat.

EMMA:

And we - announcing Cora's engagement - all her friends - even phoned the papers.

KLING:

You - with your secret from your husband? Where is she?

EMMA:

Missing all day.

(CORA rushes in and throws herself at her mother's feet)

CORA:

Oh, mama, oh mama - just as I came up the street Mr. King, editor of the Chronicle, congratulated me.

EMMA:

(Mockly)

Oh, Cora, it was a terrible mistake, to give it to the papers before I was sure.

CORA:

But mama, how in the world did you ever hear of my elopement?

EMMA:

Elopement?

KLINKE:

Elopement?

(LAWRENCE TUCKER enters C., stretches out his arms and rushes to Klinke)

TUCKER:

Father!

EMMA:

What are we going to do now? Such a man - eight affairs in six years.

KLINKE:

Auch, I can't believe they're anything more than ice cream sodas. Say, Emma, she's already married.

CORA:

Here's the ring.

EMMA:

But Ludwig, are you satisfied?

KLINKE:

Well, say, when the horse is out of the stable what is the use of locking the door?

EMMA:

But our family?

TUCKER:

Well, isn't it an excellent thing for your family to have a clever lawyer in it ----

(With a lot of meaning)

why any one of you might get sued.

EDWARD:

Ssh!

ALBERT:

Quiet!

KLINKE:

Heh! - you -

TUCKER:

(Good naturedly)

But I wouldn't press a case against a member of my own family.

KLINGE:

(Relieved)

Dear, this young man has my blessing. I'm glad to see him in the family.

ALBERT:

Me, too.

FIEDENMEYER:

And I -- most of all.

EMMA:

(Yielding)

Well, what can I say --

(Putting her arm around the two girls)

Young Rose -- two cousins in one day -- you'll all have to stay to a big family dinner.

KLINKE:

And I'm going to celebrate the happy way the day has turned out by making a little gift to charity. People always do it at weddings. I'll write a check for forty dollars.

EDWARD:

Put me down for fifty.

TIDENBERGER:

Sixty!

ALBERT:

I'm always the high man - seventy.

TUCKER:

(Putting his arm around Emma)

Well, dear mother, it's mighty good of you to invite us all to dinner. But I have to catch the first train for New York -- one of my best clients died.

KLINK:

But a dinner.....

TUCKER:

Must get there for the filing of the will. Wonder if any of you ever heard of her. Twenty-five years ago she was a well known star. Orlabelle Venter - known as The Lightning Bug.

EDWARD:

Dead?

ALBERT:

Dead?

KLINK:

Actually dead? Oh, you got to stay and celebrate.

TIDENBERGER:

Here, - if you're going to New York -- take my ticket.

EMMA:

But we won't let you go.

TUCKER:

Oh this is a big estate -- I must handle it.

KLINKE:

That woman left an estate -- rich??

TUCKER:

Rich? A hundred and eighty thousand dollars.

ALBERT:

(Grasping his forehead)

What?

TIEDENMYER:

That much?

EDWARD:

(Gasping)

More than I got!

LAWRENCE:

Well, she's been accumulating. My New York attorneys wired me, that in looking over her papers they found that for the last twenty-five years she has been receiving fourteen separate allowances each month.

KLINKE:

Fourteen? What?

EDWARD:

Fourteen exceptions?

TIEDENMYER:

That many fools!

TUCKER:

And she will sit all -- every penny -- a hundred and eighty thousand dollars -- to New York Orphan Asylum.

KLING:

(In despair)

All that good money - to a bunch of strange orphans.

EDWARD:

That blood-money - to somebody's else children.

TUCKER:

All- every penny - to poor motherless children - because poor woman, that was the great sorrow of her life - she herself, she never had a child.

(EDWARD grasps THEISEMEYER. KLING and ALBERT gaze at each other. MOBI and ROSE sink into each other's arms. GODFREY and MATHILDA stand over them. TUCKER and CORA clasp each other with LONA blessing them)

C U R T A I N .

